TALES OF OLD SCOTLAND.

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OF

OLD SCOTLAND.

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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TO

HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF FIFE, K.T.,

LORD-LIEUTENANT OF THE COUNTY OF MORAY.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THESE Tales are an attempt to re-tell some of the more picturesque and romantic episodes of Scottish history in a form more attractive to modern readers than that in which they appear in the pages of the old annalists, or in the often dry narrations of recent historians. Here and there an incident has been amplified to explain the social surroundings of the picture, or a fact emphasised to bring out its true dramatic effect.

But the Tales are in no sense fictions. They deal with actual men and actual events, and have in every case been compiled from the original authorities.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE,
ELGIN, *April* 1890.

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THE WOOING OF MALCOLM.

A ROMANCE OF DUNFERMLINE.

J. Skinner & Co

THE MONASTERY, DUNFERMLINE ABBEY.

The Wooing of Malcolm.

I.

THOSE who know Dunfermline, one of the most pleasantly situated, as it is also one of the busiest, of Scottish provincial towns, know the romantic glen of Pittencrieff, in its immediate vicinity.

Most likely they know, too—for they are, and justly, one of the "lions" of the place—the crumbling and all but obliterated ruins of the old Dun or fort from which the town derives its name—the Dun of the Crooked Linn—which stands in the heart of this glen, on a little tree-girt knoll, called the Tower Hill, overlooking a babbling burn, which crooks into an elbow at its foot.

These old ruins are all that remain of what was once the favourite residence of Malcolm Canmore—Malcolm of the Great Head—one of the best kings who ever reigned in Scotland.

Not a king who would command our unbounded admiration nowadays, perhaps; not a constitutional monarch by any means. The times in which he lived were far too rugged and out of joint for that. But a king whose ideas of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, of law and morality, were elemental in their simplicity; with whom might was a much more sacred word than right; and who possessed, at least, this

primary qualification for governing—he found out early in life what he had been sent into the world to do, and made up his mind to do it.

And so it fell out that by keeping this idea always before his eyes, this illiterate, handsome, dark-complexioned, big-headed, shaggy-haired, broad-shouldered Highlander did much good and honest work in his day. He recovered his father Duncan's throne from the usurping Macbeth. He consolidated the kingdom, as the phrase goes, by fighting with all the semi-independent Maormors and Thanes—all the savage petty tyrants who then played havoc with life and property in Scotland — and bringing them into subjection one after the other. By his repeated raids into England, he taught our neighbours across the Border a lesson they were much in need of—the lesson that Scotsmen were as good at fighting as themselves; and if the monkish English chroniclers, like poor, old, trembling Simeon of Durham, stigmatise him as cruel and pitiless, as inhuman and bloodthirsty, the best answer to that accusation is to be found in the fact that round his rough and rugged life clings, like the wild honeysuckle to the stem of some red and gnarled old Scottish fir, one of the purest, simplest, sweetest romances to be found in the history of any man, or in the annals of any country.

And the scene of this love story,—for love story it is, —is none other than this old, tumbled-down keep in the suburbs of Dunfermline.

A frowning, gloomy, and ugly tower it must have been even in its prime—utterly unsuited, one would think from the limited amount of its accommodation, to be the dwelling of even the poorest "duinnhewassal"

in Malcolm's train, let alone the King of Scotland himself. But there was too much hard work in those days for a man in Malcolm's position to have time to trouble his head about such a trifle as how he was lodged; and undoubtedly it had for him many attractions, not to say conveniences, which it would not have had for any one else.

In the first place, it had been built by himself, and men come to love the work of their own hands in stone and lime, in much the same way, and for much the same reason, that Touchstone loved Audrey—"A poor thing, my masters, but mine own." Then its situation was excellent, being sufficiently near to Dunfermline, which was then actually, if not theoretically, the capital of his kingdom, to enable him to despatch public business with comfort and facility, while affording him, at the same time, ample opportunity for indulging in his favourite recreation of hunting. Lastly, it was a "place most strongly fortified by nature, being begirt by very thick woods and protected by steep crags."

So here the King set up his household gods, and here in the autumn of 1067 he was residing—having just returned from one of his periodical raids into England, in the course of which he had pillaged Cleveland, overrun the territory of St. Cuthbert, burned down the church of St. Peter at Wearmouth, and driven before him into Scotland long trains of captive youths and maidens, "so that even to this day," says old Simeon of Durham, "I do not say no little village, but even no cottage, can be found without one of them"—when an event occurred which was destined not only to effect a radical change upon his own career, but to alter the course of his country's history, and by

transforming Scotland from a Highland into a Lowland nation, and the people from rude Celts into at least the semblance of civilised Saxons, to aid the work of nationalisation and progress in a way which centuries of war, and conquest, and revolution, not to speak of the patient, unwearied labours of generations of saints and churchmen, had not hitherto been able to do.

On one of those bright, sharp, biting mornings which in our changeful climate, during the season of the autumnal equinox, so often succeed a night of gloom and storm, the whole inmates of the Tower were thrown into a state of the greatest excitement by the arrival of a mounted messenger with the news that a huge ship—a ship larger and more splendid than any ever seen in Scotland before—had anchored in a little bay about three miles from the fort. And on the deck of this ship, the messenger went on to say, were grand and glorious figures—gallant knights, gay gentlemen, reverend priests, with servants and followers in goodly number. Who or what the strangers were the messenger had not been able to learn. But they were evidently men of high degree; and he had heard say that there were ladies among them—ladies whose beauty was not of this earth, ladies with long flowing hair like angels, whose voices were as the song of birds, and whose smile was as the light of heaven.

The news was brought to the King, and all waited impatiently to see what he would say or do.

But the King was troubled, for there was much that was disquieting in the messenger's report.

The great ship might mean war, and of war Malcolm had enough on his hands already. But the fair ladies, on the other hand—what could they mean but peace?

And had there not been a great tempest the night before? Might not the vessel have been driven into the Firth by stress of weather?

No! the mysterious strangers were no enemies. They were storm-tossed travellers, seeking but shelter from the cruel winds and the sea.

His suspicious chieftains, however, were not satisfied. With that distrust of strangers which is so marked a feature of the Celtic character, they besought the King to delay offering them hospitality till they had obtained further information about them. The King consented, and a second messenger was despatched to the bay.

He returned with news which amply confirmed the generous-minded Malcolm's opinion. They were fugitives from England on their way to foreign climes. They had been overtaken by the gale, and had sought refuge in the Firth. And then he, too, proceeded to launch forth on the unusual size and magnificence of their vessel, the splendour of its equipments, the goodly arms of its passengers, and, above all, on the princely bearing of a youth whom he had caught a glimpse of on its deck, and the loveliness of two fair young girls who were with him.

The King's interest was excited. Nor was there any longer room for mistrust.

Selecting the noblest and most gallant lords of his company, he despatched them on an embassy to the travellers, with instructions to ascertain distinctly who they were, and to offer them a welcome to his dominions.

On their return, the King eagerly questioned them as to the strangers. To his intense surprise his ambassadors reported that the princely youth that the last mes-

senger had spoken of was no less a person than Edgar the Atheling of England.

"What! the son of the noble King Edmund?"

"The same; and with him are his mother Agatha, and his sisters Margaret and Christina."

"And the lords who accompany him—who are they?"

"Gospatric, the powerful Earl of Northumbria, and Marlesswein, and many another northern chief, driven, like the Atheling, from their homes by William the Bastard of Normandy."

"The Atheling, and an exile!" exclaimed Malcolm, addressing those around him, and speaking in Gaelic, which was at that time the language in habitual use in Scotland. "Surely it is a providence that has brought him to these shores! For I, too, was an exile once at the Court of his grandfather, Edward the Confessor, whose soul may God preserve; and never shall I forget the kindness which for fifteen long years that godly man meted out to me, with no churlish hand. Come, my lords," he added; "I must go and greet him at once."

The next moment, attended by his haughty chiefs, he was galloping at full speed along the rocky track —for road it could not be called—leading to the little bay, now known by the name of St. Margaret's Hope, where the English vessel lay. A few minutes more, and he was on board, welcoming the exiles in their own Saxon tongue to his bleak but not inhospitable dominions.

It was late in the evening before he left his new-found friends. Nor did he do so until he had extracted from them a promise that they would make his house their home during their stay in Scotland, whether that were long or short. They agreed to do so on the morn; and then he bade them a cordial good-night.

II.

ALL the way home the King was pensive and melancholy. His mood, his followers remarked, was very different to that in which he had started in the morning. He rode in front of his companions, seldom speaking to them, but often turning round to look back upon the ship whose tall masts and huge bulk were visible till he was almost within sight of the Tower. And when, indeed, he did deign to address a word or two to any of them it was to reprove the rudeness of their manners, or to lament the scantiness of the castle's resources and the unworthiness of its accommodation for such polished and peerless guests. And often, too, he sighed as if his very heart would break.

It did not need a witch to tell his attendants what was the cause of the King's altered demeanour.

Malcolm was in love, and the object of his passion was the Atheling's fair sister, the Princess Margaret.

Little though we are told by the old chroniclers of her personal appearance, this at least is certain, that, with the single and doubtful exception of Mary Queen of Scots, Margaret was the loveliest woman whose name appears in Scottish history. And in this perhaps is to be found the excuse—if excuse indeed is needed—for the King's sudden infatuation. She appears to have been of medium height, with soft blue eyes, and a lithe willowy figure. But her greatest beauty was her hair, which was golden in tint, very abundant, and particularly fine in texture. This beauty she retained to her dying day. A Scotch historian, who saw her head at the Scotch College at Douay in 1785, speaks

with rapture of its luxuriance and colour, and as, after the fashion of the day, she wore it hanging in a golden shower over her shoulders, we may readily conceive what effect it would have on the heart of the impulsive and susceptible Malcolm.

As for the beauty of her character, we shall have occasion in the sequel to show how much it surpassed even that of her person. Meanwhile, however, we must proceed with our narrative.

You will readily conceive what bustle there was in the old Tower the rest of that night and the whole of the next morning, what a scrubbing and cleaning out of rooms, what a strewing of the floors with fresh rushes, what a turning-up of all the arrangements of the household! But at last everything was ready, and, decking himself in his most gallant robes, the impatient King sat down to await the arrival of his guests.

At length, late in the afternoon, the watchman hurried down from the battlements with the welcome news that the cavalcade was approaching.

With a very slight effort of imagination you may picture the scene for yourselves.

There were no carriages in Scotland in those days, and the wheeled litters in use in England for the conveyance of ladies on long journeys were as yet unknown on this side of the Border. Accordingly, the journey was made by most of the party on horseback. Some, however, preferred to walk. Amongst these were the two young Princesses, and tradition still points out—about two miles from Dunfermline—a great stone by the roadside on which Margaret is said to have rested on her way to the Tower.

The jewelled swords and bright armour of the knights

glistened in the evening sunlight. The long flowing velvets and satins of the ladies' dresses, black and purple, ruby and white, contrasted harmoniously with the marten and weasel and ermine-trimmed robes of the attendant lords. The neighing of horses and prancing of chargers added life and vivacity to the scene. And not the least picturesque feature in the procession was the long train of servants and seamen who brought up the rear, clad in short white tunics, and carrying huge clamped coffers full of treasure and dresses, furs, gold and silver plate, household utensils, and relics of the saints.

There was one small coffer in particular, borne between two shaven, sandalled, black-robed, rope-girt priests, which the Princess Margaret never for a moment allowed out of her sight; for it enclosed the greatest earthly treasure which she possessed. This was the celebrated Black Rood which afterwards became so famous in Scottish history. It was a portion of the true Cross fitted into a cross of gold about an ell long, set with diamonds and enclosed in a black case. So precious was this relic esteemed, that sixty-one years later her youngest son, David, that "sair sanct for the croun," founded the Church and Abbey of Holyrood for its more suitable reception.

And Margaret was right in her appreciation of its value. Little though she knew it, that crumbling piece of holy wood was destined to do more for the advancement of religion and the spread of civilisation in Scotland than the priceless contents of all the other coffers combined.

And so, in this wise, Margaret and her companions reached the Tower.

What followed, could we but know all the details,

would afford material not for a simple narrative like this, but for a whole three volume novel.

Day by day the King's passion increased. Deeper and wilder, and madder with every succeeding moon grew his love, till before autumn had hardened into winter, and winter had yielded to spring, he had discovered for himself what those around him had long ago discovered for him—that he could not live without the fair Saxon princess.

The course of true love, however, runs no more smoothly with kings than it does with meaner folk; and when Malcolm at last screwed up his courage to ask the Atheling to give him his sister to wife, to his intense astonishment he was refused.

Nor need we wonder at this. For, in truth, it was a very unequal match.

Margaret was rich; Malcolm was poor. Margaret was descended from a long line of powerful kings; Malcolm's sovereignty was of his own making. Margaret was a deeply learned and highly cultured woman; Malcolm could not read, far less could he sign his name.

And to these objections of Edgar were to be added those of the Princess herself. When her mother spoke to her on the subject, her only answer was a flood of burning tears. It was not that she had any aversion to Malcolm himself. On the contrary, she readily admitted that he was worthy of any good and honest woman's love. But from her earliest years, she said, she had meant, like her sister Christina, to be the bride of heaven—a happier and nobler lot than the happiest and the noblest match this vain world of ours has or can ever have to bestow.

Not once, nor twice, but many times in the course of that long and troubled winter Malcolm preferred his suit, only to be met with the same reply. But the King's love was too deep to be baulked of its purpose; and when spring came round, and the green shoots began to appear on the wild rose-bushes by the wood-side, and the meadows were dappled with cowslips and marsh-mallows, and bees began to hum in the air and birds to sing in the trees, and all things invited to love, Malcolm determined to make one last and decisive effort to achieve his purpose.

It was successful. And Edgar's assent as his sister's legal guardian having also been obtained, though not without difficulty, "the wedding took place in the year 1068, and was held with great magnificence, not far from the bay where she was brought up, at a place called Dunfermline, which was then the King's town."

III.

From this period Margaret's life belongs to the history of her adopted country. And it is no exaggeration to say that no one, man or woman, has ever before or since exercised a more powerful or more beneficial influence on its affairs.

The rough work of consolidating the various independent thanedoms of which Scotland had hitherto consisted into one solid and homogeneous kingdom had already been done, more or less completely, by her husband. It was reserved for Margaret to finish the work by overcoming the animosities and cementing the amity between proud and jealous chieftains, by softening their rugged manners, by diverting their attention from their own personal feuds and squabbles to objects affecting the national good. None but a woman could have accomplished such a task. It required a woman's tact, a woman's gentle, but at the same time powerful, hand, a woman's clear head, above all, a woman's good and kindly heart.

It is curious and not uninstructive to note the manner in which Margaret effected her purpose. She did so in a way which, in those rough old days at least, would probably have occurred to no one but herself. She brought into play two of the strongest emotions which influence human action. She appealed to the imagination and to the piety of all with whom she was brought in contact.

Her husband called himself a king; but there was nothing kingly in his surroundings. She commenced by increasing the pomp and circumstance of Malcolm's

court, and by causing both the King and those about him to be apparelled with more splendour than they had hitherto been accustomed to. Merchants were encouraged to bring from abroad costly furs, silken robes, gorgeous armour. The King, who had probably hitherto eaten his meat from a wooden trencher, she caused to be served at table on dishes of silver and gold. She herself, when she went abroad, was ever splendidly attired—not, as she told her confessor, for the sake of show, but because it was befitting a queen.

And she carried this principle into every department of life. Everything that could elevate, everything that could refine, everything that, in a word, could civilise, was eagerly sought out and adopted by her. She induced her husband to give up his old and inconvenient, but much-loved hunting-box in the Glen of Pittencrieff, and to build himself a new and gorgeous palace in Dunfermline. She persuaded him to erect the magnificent Church of the Holy Trinity, afterwards the Cathedral of Dunfermline, not only that the services of the Church might be conducted with proper splendour, but as an offering for her own and her husband's salvation, and as a fit burial-place for the kings and queens of Scotland in all time coming. And this church, in which she placed the famous Black Rood, enclosed in a jewelled shrine, she further enriched with many vessels of pure gold for the service of the altar. All her spare time and that of her ladies was devoted to its adornment.

Her confessor, Turgot, who wrote her life, gives us a pleasant picture of the Queen and her maidens at work on the priestly vestments in her chamber. Nothing was to be seen therein but copes and chasubles, stoles and frontals. Her ladies sat round her working dili-

gently, she herself the busiest of them all. Men were not allowed to enter when they were at work, unless the Queen herself brought them. As the late Principal Shairp observes, "This part of the biography reads like the description of some ritualistic English lady's boudoir at the present hour. But eight centuries make some difference in the wisdom or folly of these things."

No doubt, as has been said, with all this, policy had much to do. But as little can it be questioned that Margaret's own religious convictions were of a very deep-rooted character indeed.

This was abundantly evidenced by her personal piety. All the old writers agree in describing her as little short of a saint on earth, and the cave in which she was in the habit of using as an oratory for private prayer is still pointed out in Pittencrieff Glen. But her religion took an eminently practical form. In alms-giving and good works she was particularly active. "During the whole of her lifetime," says William of Malmesbury, "wherever she might be, she had twenty-four beggars whom she supplied with food and clothing. In Lent, forestalling the chanting of the priests, she used to watch all night in church, herself assisting at triple matins—of the Trinity, of the Cross, and of St. Mary—afterwards repeating the Psalter, with tears bedewing her raiment and upheaving her breast. Then she would walk out of church, and feed the poor—first three, then nine, then twenty-four, at last three hundred—herself standing by with the King, and pouring water on their hands."

But perhaps the most eloquent, as it certainly is the most touching, evidence of her worth, is to be found in the love and admiration which all his life long Malcolm

lavished on his wife. It resembled nothing so much as the affection which a dog lavishes on his master. To the rude, ignorant, hot-tempered, but honest and well-meaning Highlander, Margaret was a being of a superior order. Whatever she loved, he loved; whatever she eschewed, he eschewed. He could not read, but the books she read he would turn over and gaze on lovingly. The missals she used he would carry off by stealth to the goldsmith, and return them to her splendidly adorned with gold and precious stones. And if any book was particularly dear to her, he would kiss it and press it to his heart, and sigh over it as a lover kisses and sighs over the letters of his mistress.

And if any of you would know whether this love of his was returned, I need only refer you to the closing scene of this good Queen's life.

It is the year 1093. Malcolm with his two elder sons is in Northumbria fighting beneath the walls of Alnwick for the rights he claimed over this part of England. Margaret, in her husband's absence, is residing for safety with the younger members of her family in the Maiden Castle, as it was then called—the strong and picturesquely-posed fortress which now we know by the name of the Castle of Edinburgh. Her health had for some time been failing, and she is now stretched on a bed of sickness. Suddenly she turns to her attendants.

"Some heavy calamity to-day," she says to her confessor Turgot, who was sitting beside her, "is happening to the kingdom of the Scots."

But no one heeds her forebodings, for all are too much occupied by the deadly illness of the Queen.

Four days later, feeling some alleviation of her pain, she rises, and with the assistance of her maidens,

betakes herself to the oratory to hear mass. But the effort is too great for her. She returns to her bed, knowing, alas! all too well that the hand of death is upon her.

Sensible that her hour has come—her face was already covered with a deadly pallor—she bids her attendant priests bring her the Black Rood, which all her life she has held in special reverence. There is some delay in opening the casket, and in her distress she laments her unworthiness that will not suffer her to look once more on the holy Cross.

"O, unhappy that we are!" she cries in her distress. "O, guilty that we are, shall we not be permitted once more to look upon that holy Cross?"

But at last it is handed to her. She kisses it devoutly, and tries to sign with it her face and eyes. Her body is now growing cold, but she continues to hold it before her eyes with both hands, while with weak and faltering voice she repeats the fiftieth Psalm.

At this moment the door of her chamber is burst open, and her son Edgar, who has been with his father in England, precipitately enters.

Rallying all the remains of her strength, she passionately inquires how it fares with his father and brother.

The youth, seeing his mother in extremities, hesitates to answer, and only falters out that they were well.

But she adjures him to speak more plainly, and at length he tells all.

The army of the Scots is defeated. His father is dead; so is his brother Edward.

Not a word of sorrow, not a murmur escapes her. Repeating the prayer for deliverance which the offices

of the Church prescribe for those who have received extreme unction, her head sinks back on the pillow. Her eyes close; and then peacefully, calmly, tranquilly, she passes to the land of eternal rest.

She died, indeed, just in time.

The breath was scarcely out of her body when Malcolm's brother, Donald Bain, or the Red, invaded the kingdom and besieged the castle, where he knew that Malcolm's sons were in attendance upon their mother. To avoid its falling into his hands, the Queen's body was brought down by a postern on the western side, and conveyed without a moment's delay to Dunfermline. Malcolm's children also escaped by the same means. "Some indeed tell," says Fordun, "that during the whole of that journey a cloudy mist was round about all this family, and miraculously sheltered them from the gaze of any of their foes, so that nothing hindered them as they journeyed by land or by sea." She was buried, as she had herself desired, in the Church of the Holy Trinity, in front of the altar, on which stood the Holy Rood—the last object that had met her eyes on earth.

A century and a half later, in the reign of Alexander III., her remains were lifted from their resting-place, and enclosed in a costly silver shrine, set with gold and precious stones. The church was full of a gorgeous company. The King, the Queen, and his mother were present. Bishops and abbots thronged the choir. Organs chanted and voices sang in chorus as the procession of priests and acolytes bearing the precious burden advanced up the chancel to the high altar.

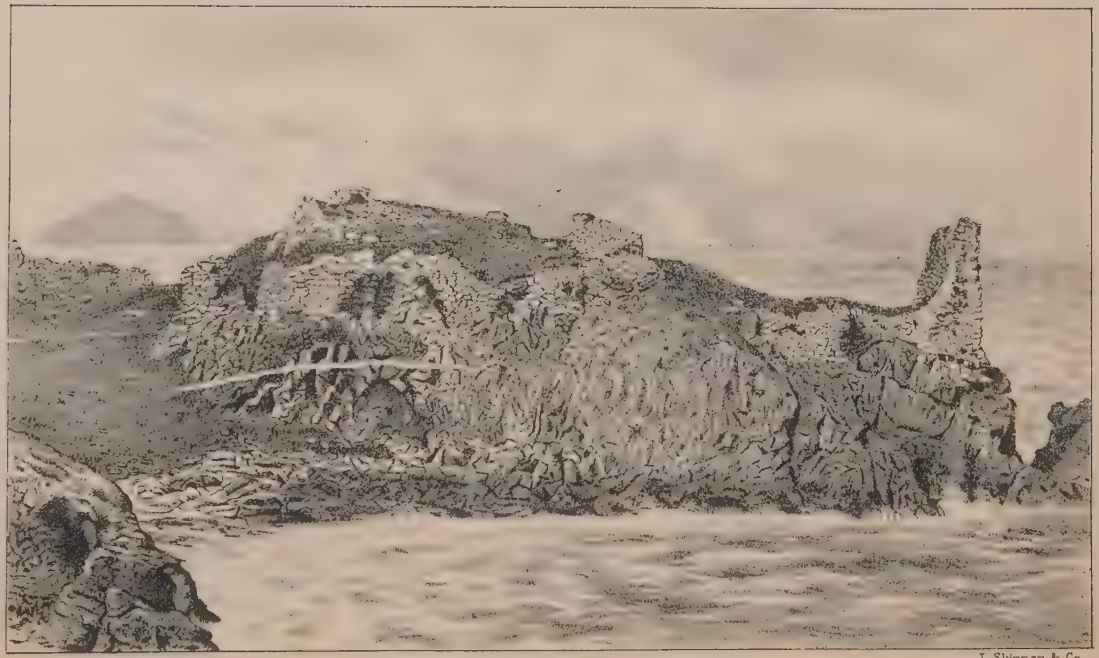
It had reached the little wicket near the tomb of her husband, King Malcolm, "who lay at the north side

of the further nave of the chancel under an arched canopy," when suddenly the arms of the bearers become exhausted and powerless. The bier was placed on the ground and more bearers were sent for. But the more they strove to lift it, the less could they stir it. At length, as if by a sudden inspiration, one of the bye-standers suggested that similar honours should be paid to the body of Malcolm.

This was done. His tomb was opened and his bones were taken up. And when, on the 19th June 1250, the bodies of both were brought, side by side, in solemn state to be laid in their appointed places, their interment proceeded without the slightest difficulty.

And many miracles, the old chroniclers tell us, were afterwards wrought in that place.

THE WANDERINGS OF THE BRUCE.



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TURNBERRY CASTLE.

Wanderings of the Bruce.

I.

THE long and desperate fight for freedom, which was crowned by the battle of Bannockburn in 1314, was fought by Robert the Bruce single-handed. A small body of faithful friends and counsellors — "the Good Lord James," Randolph, Walter the Steward, and others whose names are household words in Scottish history— indeed he had. But the mind which controlled, the spirit that maintained the protracted struggle of no less than eight years, was the Bruce's alone. And thus the story of that great fight resolves itself into little more than the narrative of the King's personal history.

Truth, we know, is often stranger than fiction; and the story of Robert the Bruce is an example of it. The perils he braved were nothing to those that he escaped. The sufferings he endured were child's play compared to those which a hundred times over he managed to elude. And how all his trials and privations bring out the noble character of the man!—his cheerfulness in misfortune, his amiability of disposition, his care for the comfort of others, his warm-heartedness, his absolute unselfishness! The Bruce's life is a romance, but it is the

romance of a hero. Head and shoulders he towers over every other name inscribed in the annals of his country. Wallace comes nearest to him, but Wallace the soldier was infinitely greater than Wallace the man. With Bruce it is different. Bruce the man is even a nobler character than Bruce the liberator of his country.

He was born in Scotland, but whether at Turnberry or Lochmaben is uncertain, on the 11th July 1274. He was Lord of Annandale and Earl of Carrick, and he possessed large estates in England. Royal blood flowed in his veins. His grandfather, Robert de Brus, competed with John Baliol for the kingdom in 1292, and though the English King, as Lord Paramount, assigned the crown to his rival on the ground that he was one degree nearer than Brus in blood to the common ancestor through whom both claimed, Scotchmen and Scotch lawyers generally held Robert de Brus' title as preferable, in respect that it was deduced from a son and not from a daughter. But de Brus accepted King Edward's decision. He preferred a life of inglorious ease, basking in the favour of the powerful English King, to justifying his title by force of arms. And his son—also a Robert de Brus—did the same.

And for a time, indeed, it seemed as if the Liberator would follow his father's and grandfather's example. For the first two and twenty years of his life, the Bruce, though by no means giving up his hereditary claim to the Scottish crown, lived as an Englishman, even if we concede that he felt as a Scotchman.

Baliol resigned the crown in 1296. At that time the two nearest in succession to the throne were Baliol's cousin, John Comyn—"the Red Comyn," as he was called—on the one side, and Robert Bruce on the

other. But it soon became evident that the English King intended to confer it on neither. Edward had found a candidate whom he considered better fitted than either, and that was himself. The times, however, were not propitious to his pretensions. He determined, therefore, to wait his opportunity. Meantime his policy was to keep the throne vacant as long as he possibly could. To this, however, Bruce could not be brought to consent. Scotland, he saw, was in danger of perishing for want of a king. And none but a native king would satisfy it. Whether that was Comyn or himself was a matter of minor consequence, though of course he naturally preferred that the prize should fall to himself. Accordingly he opened negotiations with Comyn with a view to their settling this matter between themselves. But Comyn was a traitor, both to his country and his friend. If he did not communicate the whole details of the transaction to Edward, he at least told him sufficient to shake his faith in Bruce. The result was that Bruce, who was at that time residing at the English court, fell into disfavour with Edward, and his friends, of whom he had no lack even about the person of his English master, believed,—and their belief was well-founded,—that his life was actually in danger.

One day in February 1306 the Earl of Gloucester, who was his kinsman, sent him a pair of gilded spurs and twelve pence. It was a significant hint, and Bruce took it at once. That same evening at twilight, though the weather was wintry, and the snow lay on the ground, Bruce fled from court. It is said that, to avoid detection, he had his horse and those of his two attendants shod backwards. Without halting, and with no adventures on the way, except that—if we may believe

tradition—he met and killed a messenger carrying despatches from Comyn which disclosed his treachery, he made straight for his castle at Lochmaben, which he reached in safety.

Beyond the determination to throw in his part and lot with his countrymen, he had no definite plans for the future. Accident, however—or should we not rather say Providence?—shaped his course for him within a few days after his arrival.

At that time the English yoke pressed very heavily on Scottish shoulders, more heavily indeed even than it afterwards did in the days of Cromwell. English commanders, or commanders who were English in all but the name, held possession of its castles. English judges, or judges who were English in all but the name, administered its laws.

On the day that these judges were holding their assize court at Dumfries, Comyn and Bruce met by appointment in the Church of the Minorites of that town, in order to come to some understanding as to their respective claims. What transpired between them is not known; but after a somewhat lengthened conference, Bruce was seen emerging from the door of the church pale and agitated.

As he was mounting his horse two of his neighbours, James Lindsay and Roger Kirkpatrick — the one a relation, the other an old and intimate friend—came up to him and asked him what had happened.

"I doubt," he said, "I have slain the Red Comyn."

"Doubt!" exclaimed Kirkpatrick, "I'll mak sicker!"

Rushing into the church accompanied by Lindsay he found Comyn lying on the ground behind the high altar. A group of shaven friars knelt beside him, trying to

staunch the blood that was welling out from a wound in his breast. "Can he live?" inquired Kirkpatrick.

"I can," murmured the wounded man faintly.

Without a word Kirkpatrick and Lindsay plunged their daggers into his body up to their hilts. Then they fled.

Bruce's position was now one of extreme danger. The crime that he had committed was a terrible one. The homicide—for no one can say from the evidence extant that it was more—was the least part of the business.

The true enormity of the affair lay in the sacrilege that accompanied it. To kill a man was a crime: but to desecrate a church with blood was a sin. Every one knew that for such an offence there was only one punishment, the greatest, the most awful of all,—excommunication. And such a sentence, in excluding the transgressor from the Church, also put him, or was intended to put him, without the pale of the law. It made him an outcast for time and for eternity.

In due time, as was expected, Bruce was solemnly excommunicated. But the thunders of the Vatican were launched in vain. The bolt fell powerless. Long before it arrived Bruce had received absolution for his sins from the constituted Church authorities of Scotland. More wonderful than all, he had actually enlisted them on his side.

This extraordinary result was in large measure due to William Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews—a man who, from what he actually accomplished rather than from the means by which he accomplished it, deserves to be held in remembrance by all who love their country. Lamberton was anything but a perfect character. No personage of his day had broken more vows, violated more oaths of allegiance. But his patriotism was in-

corruptible. He was a Scotchman first, and a Churchman afterwards. It did not matter to him who led the apparently forlorn hope of Scottish independence. So long as he was leading it he was content to be that man's friend. And thus he was ready to countenance Bruce as cheerfully as he had formerly countenanced Wallace, and to sanction with all the weight of his personal and official influence a cause that had nothing but its inherent justice to recommend it.

It was a crisis at which audacity rather than cool deliberation was likely to succeed. Fully convinced of this, the Bruce, acting with the approval of the clergy, determined to take a step whose boldness has seldom been equalled by persons situated as he was. He determined to have himself crowned at Scone; and for this purpose he left his castle of Lochmaben for Glasgow, where he was to be joined by some friends who supported his enterprise.

On his journey thither an interesting, and, as it turned out, important incident occurred. One day as he was riding along he was met by a knight, well armed and horsed, who, dismounting when he saw Bruce's cavalcade approaching, flung himself on the ground and did homage to him as his sovereign. There was something in his appearance which at once commended itself to Bruce's favourable notice. He was lank and tall, with coal-black hair,—

> "Great boned, broad shouldered, but his look withal
> Mild, sweet, and debonair."

He turned out to be the young Sir James Douglas, son of that Douglas who had fought shoulder to shoulder with Wallace, and who, for this "treason," as Edward chose to regard it, had seen his extensive patrimonial

estates forfeited, and himself proclaimed an outlaw and a traitor. It was Lamberton who had sent the young knight to join the Bruce's party. He had been staying with the Bishop at his castle of St. Andrews when Bruce's "braid letter," announcing the death of Comyn, had reached the prelate's hands. It roused all the slumbering energies of his nature; and the good Bishop, whom he consulted as to what he should do, did his utmost to fan the flame. He counselled him to cast in his lot with the patriotic party at once. The poor youth, however, was penniless. He had not even a charger. The kind old Bishop came to his rescue.

"In my stable," he said, "eating its head off for want of work, stands Ferrand, my palfrey, the fleetest horse in all broad Scotland. Go and take it. But do it as of your own deed; and if any one asks you how you came by it, see that you tell not that I gave you this counsel."

Before next morning the youth was on his way towards Glasgow.

Such was the first meeting between the Bruce and "the Good Lord James"—one of the noblest names in Scottish history.

Bruce's coronation took place at Scone on 29th March 1306. As a spectacle it was shorn of much of its honour. The Stone of Destiny—the Coronation Stone on which countless previous generations of Scottish monarchs had been inaugurated—had been removed by Edward I. to Westminster. There were no robes; there was no crown. But Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow, who officiated at the ceremony, supplied the deficiencies of the King's wardrobe from his own; and a circlet of gold, probably borrowed by the Abbot of Scone from one of the statues of saints or kings which adorned his

abbey, was made use of instead of the hereditary emblem of royalty. A still more important deficiency was the absence of the Earl of Fife, whose privilege it was, as the lineal descendant of Macduff, to instal the king on his throne. The Earl on whom this function hereditarily devolved was for the time an adherent of the English party, and this part of the ceremony had accordingly perforce to be omitted.

But on the second day after the coronation, who should arrive—bringing with her not only a considerable following, but what was even of greater moment under the circumstances, the war-horses of her husband—but Isabella, Countess of Buchan, the sister of the absent Earl. She at once claimed the hereditary privilege of her family, and, very disastrously for herself as it turned out, her claim was allowed. Whether or not, as some writers hold, the ceremony of coronation was gone over again *de novo*, the installation duly took place with all its quaint and antique solemnity. But the poor lady paid dearly for her public spirit. A few months later, when the fortunes of the Bruce were at their lowest ebb, she was captured and conveyed to the castle of Berwick. There, by Edward's orders, a strong cage, like those in which wild beasts are now confined in menageries, was built in one of the upper turrets. Erected of wood and iron, latticed with beams of timber, cross-barred, and strongly secured, it was placed in such a position that the miseries of the unhappy lady could be visible to all who cared to see them; and in this barbarous place of confinement she was destined to pass the next four years of her life.

Such was the chivalrous Edward's treatment of high-born Scottish dames.

II.

THE next eight years of Bruce's life were the hardest and the most heroic of his career. Persecuted by fortune, pursued by inveterate ill-luck, every day seemed to remove him further from the goal of his ambition—the liberation of his country. Yet he never gave in. Often and often indeed, in the midst of his "mishaps, flights, and dangers, his hardships and weariness, his hunger and thirst, his watchings and fastings, his nakedness and cold, his snares and banishment," he felt inclined to retire from the unequal contest. But his sense of duty, the feeling that he had put his hand to the plough, sustained him. There came, as there always comes to every one in the midst of his direst distress, a transient gleam of prosperity; his hopes revived, and the Bruce, like Richard, was himself again.

After his decisive defeat at Methven on the 19th June 1306 by Odomar de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, the English guardian of Scotland, Bruce fled to the fastnesses of the Highland hills, accompanied by Sir James Douglas and a small body of his faithful adherents. Here he was shortly afterwards joined by the Queen and her ladies. The adventurous life of these royal and highborn outlaws has been well described by Barbour in his national epic of "The Brus." They lived by fishing and fowling, and, thanks to Douglas, who was equally expert as an archer and an angler, they did not fare badly. Venison, eels, pike, salmon, and trout, formed their ordinary food. Sometimes, however, they were reduced to catching minnows. But they bore their privations with the utmost cheerfulness.

Douglas' wit and animal spirits kept them all in good humour.

In the course of their wanderings they came to the borders of Atholl and Argyll.

The Lord of Lorn, Allaster Macdougal, was a near relative of the Red Comyn whom Bruce had slain, and when he learned that the King was "in his country," he collected his clansmen and attacked him and his little band at a place afterwards known as Dal Righ (the King's Field). Bruce was again defeated. But, mainly owing to the prodigies of valour he performed, "he did not lose many of his men." It was at this fight that he is traditionally said to have left the brooch which secured his plaid—(and which, under the name of the Brooch of Lorn, is still preserved in the family of the Macdougals)—in the hands of one of his assailants.

Another incident which happened after the battle is thus described by Barbour.

Three of the Macdougals, known by the name of Makyndrosser or doorkeepers—no doubt from the office they held in the service of the head of the clan,—a father and two sons, had sworn that if they came across the Bruce they would either kill him or perish in the attempt. They lay in wait for him in a little defile "betwix ane lochside and ane brae," and at a part so narrrow that he could not possibly turn his horse. As soon as he came in sight the three rushed at him at once. The first who approached tried to seize his horse's bridle, but the King dealt him such a blow with his sword that he cut off his arm and shoulder. The next one caught him by the leg and attempted to pitch him out of his stirrups, where-

upon, Bruce digging his spurs into his horse's flanks, made it spring suddenly forward, which upset the Highlander, who fell beneath his horse's feet. But as he still retained hold of the King's stirrup, he was dragged along the ground behind his horse till Bruce had despatched the third, when, as he was in the act of attempting to rise, the King cleft his head in two with his sword.

> "On this wise him delivered he
> Of all thir felon foes three."

But the winter was now approaching. Already the brackens on the hill-sides were seared and yellow; the bloom had disappeared from the heather; the golden leaves of the beeches were dropping in showers from their boughs. The increasing inclemency of the weather, the wild winds howling through the glens, and the constant showers of hail and sleet, aggravated the sufferings of the party. It was no time for delicately nurtured ladies to be going gipsying when the snow lay in the corries of the mountains, and the moss was wet with the overflow of the torrents that rushed down their riven sides. The King determined that, cost what it might, he would place the Queen and her ladies in a place of safety. He sent them accordingly, under the charge of his brother Neil and the Earl of Atholl, to his castle of Kildrummie in Aberdeenshire —the only stronghold which still remained to him— while he himself, with the remnant of his adherents, about two hundred in number, resolved to make for Cantyre, and from thence take passage to Ireland.

After three days and three nights wandering without food, they arrived about nightfall on the eastern shores of Loch Lomond. Their object was to cross to the other

side of the loch; but no means of transport could be found. At last, after much searching and considerable delay, Sir James Douglas discovered an old half-sunken boat, large enough to hold two men and a rower. The King and Douglas crossed first, then the rest of the party, two by two. The whole of that night and a great part of the next day was occupied in this manner. Meanwhile, on the other side of the loch, the King, with those who had already crossed, gathered round the gleaming watchfire,—Bruce endeavouring to cheer the spirits of his followers, and to while away the long dreary hours of darkness by reading to them by its fitful light the romance of worthy Ferambras, "the doughty Saracen King who fought with Oliver the peer of Charlemagne," a tale which a recent writer says is "essentially the story of a few brave souls fighting against a huge oppression, and finally obtaining the victory, and which was eminently fitted to inspire them with forgetfulness and courage in their then dismal and depressing circumstances."

And so in this wise and kindly fashion, "the gud King," as Barbour calls him,

> "Mad them gamyn and solace
> Till that his folk was passed o'er."

No wonder that the Bruce's followers were ready to go with him whithersoever he led!

Shortly after this, Bruce with his small but devoted band crossed over to Rachrin, a small island on the northern coast of Ireland, where for the first time for many months he felt he was in safety.

His flight—for it was nothing else—gave Edward the opportunity of retaliation for which he had so long been on the outlook. He ordered siege to be laid to the

Castle of Kildrummie, where the Queen, her daughter Marjory, Bruce's brother Neil, and his sisters Mary and Christina had taken refuge. The Queen and Marjory—afterwards the wife of Walter the Steward, and thus the progenitrix of the Stuart Kings of Scotland—escaped to the sanctuary of St. Duthac in Ross-shire, but were subsequently treacherously betrayed and sent into captivity in England. Neil was killed defending the castle. Mary and Christina were soon after made prisoners. And thus almost at a single blow Bruce, whose affections were of the warmest, was deprived of all that made up the happiness of his life.

Fortunately for his country, fortunately also, perhaps, for himself, Bruce did not hear of all this till many months afterwards. To have got such tidings in the midst of his sufferings at Rachrin, would in all probability have confirmed him in the idea, that all through this dark winter was ever present to his mind, whether it might not be better for him and for his friends that he should retire from the contest before greater evil befell them, and go and join the army of the Crusaders in Palestine.

As it was, he was ultimately diverted from this project by the merest accident.

One day as he was lying in his miserable cabin, listening to the waves dashing against the rocks and the winds whistling round its turf-built sides, his eyes fell upon a spider dangling from a long line attached to one of the rafters of the roof. What it was about he could not exactly make out at first, but after watching it for a little he saw that it was trying to swing itself across from the beam to which its thread was hanging to another opposite, evidently for the purpose of fastening

its line thereto. Six times the little creature made the attempt, and six times it failed.

"Strange!" thought Bruce to himself, "that is just the number of times that I have fought with the enemies of my country and been defeated!"

He saw the spider preparing to make another venture.

"If it succeeds"—he exclaimed.

But at that moment the spider swung itself forward, and this time it was successful.

Like an inspiration the thought flashed through Bruce's mind—"Then so may I!"

From that moment the idea of yielding was given up for ever; the renewal of the struggle was the thought that now engrossed every instant of his time.

He brooded on it daily, nightly, hourly; it formed the sole topic of his conversation with his friends; and so far as he could he prepared for it.

His men, of whom he had still about two or three thousand, were daily instructed in that carefully thought out system of warfare which he left at his death as a legacy to his people, while their leisure hours were occupied in constructing a fleet of small galleys with which he intended to make the descent upon Scotland.

When the spring came round again he sent Sir James Douglas and Sir Robert Boyd across to Arran to attack the castle of Brodick. The two knights took it by an ambuscade, and captured a valuable booty of arms, clothing, and provisions. Ten days afterwards Bruce arrived on the island in person with the remainder of his troops. Unaware of his intended coming, the first tidings Douglas got of the King's arrival was the sound of his horn echoing through the glens.

There was a joyful meeting, and much rejoicing over Douglas' success.

The King's first care was to send over a messenger to Carrick, "his own country," to ascertain the state of public feeling there. If he found that it was in his favour he was on an appointed day to light a fire on Turnberry Head—a headland on the coast of Ayrshire opposite Arran. By that token Bruce would understand that he might then arrive in safety with his troops. If no fire was lighted, he could take this as importing that his cause had little chance of success.

By earliest dawn on the day fixed Bruce and his companions were on the outlook for the signal; but the sun rose higher and higher in the heavens, and still no flaming beacon gladdened their eyes. At length, a little past twelve o'clock, the King thought he saw a fire burning on the Head. He called his "menyhe" about him and pointed it out to them. "Ilk man thocht well that he it saw." In a moment the whole troop was in commotion. The galleys were launched, their provisions and camp equipage hastily packed into them, and, as the sun was setting behind Goatfell, Bruce and his faithful followers put to sea, bound for the Land of Promise, which lay three or four hours' sail over against them. Darkness fell upon them before they were half-way across, but the light, ever burning brighter and brighter, was their Pharos, and for it they steered.

They reached it in safety and without adventure.

But hardly had their keels grated against the rocks when the messenger, whose name was Cuthbert, made his appearance upon the scene in a state of the greatest excitement.

He had heard the plash of their oars as they neared the land, and he had run down to tell them that in landing they were only thrusting their heads into the lion's jaws. In the neighbouring castle was an English captain, Lord Percy, with a garrison of over three hundred men. The Bruce's name, instead of being a tower of strength, was everywhere held in derision. All in the district were well affected to the English rule. Every hope of a rising must be once and for all abandoned.

"Traitor," said Bruce, seizing him by the throat, "then why did you light the fire?"

"I did not light it," he gasped out, "and I know not who did."

Cuthbert's advice was that they should re-embark at once. But Edward Bruce, the King's brother, was of a different opinion. He had once more set foot on his native Scotland, he said, and he did not intend to leave it again. To advance might be dangerous, but to retreat was still more so, though perhaps in a different way. His opinion prevailed, and the result justified its wisdom. For Bruce not only began to gain ground in the affections of the people, but he was able by little victories over the English garrison—victories which brought him in sundry acceptable stores of victuals and arms, and even horses and plate—to inspire Percy and his men with an exaggerated idea of his forces, and to quicken the hopes and courage of his own adherents.

This little gleam of prosperity was transient only; and even it was clouded by the news that he received here of the capture of Kildrummie and the captivity of his wife and family. This was speedily followed by

the intelligence of the defeat of his two brothers, Thomas and Alexander, at Loch Ryan in Galloway, and their capture and execution by Edward's orders.

It was a calamity that would have killed most men. It only nerved the Bruce to greater exertion. To the wrongs of his country were now added his private wrongs—wrongs so numerous and so terrible that they cried aloud for revenge.

Accordingly he crossed over into Galloway.

III.

But the tide of his fortunes had not yet turned, and nothing ensued but further disaster. The men of Galloway, a rude and savage race of Celtic origin, whose chief was a relation of Macdougal of Lorn, gave evidence of all the native ferocity of their disposition. Not content with aiding and abetting the English in laying plots to assassinate him, they assisted them also in hunting him down with bloodhounds.

On two occasions, at least, Bruce's life was spared almost by a miracle.

One morning as Bruce in company with his page was wandering in the brake at some little distance from his camp, he was set upon by three villains—a father and his two sons—near relations of his own, whom English gold had corrupted, and who, knowing his habits, had lain in wait for him in the covert since daybreak. The father carried a sword, the elder son a sword and handaxe, and the younger a sword and a spear. Bruce had no weapon but his sword, which he carried hanging round his neck. As for his "chamber boy" he had nothing but a little bow and arrow. When he saw them approaching Bruce called the boy to him and asked him to give him his bow and arrow.

"These villains mean to attack me," he said. "If I prevail, you will have weapons enough. If I die, make your escape as quick as you can." Then bidding him remove to a little distance, he calmly waited his enemies' approach.

As soon as they came within speaking distance Bruce bade them halt and say what they had to say.

"Ah," said the father with unctuous hypocrisy, "why should you have suspicion of your own kinsmen? Who should be near to you if not I?"

Bruce's only reply was angrily to repeat his order. Still prating of the innocence of their intentions, the men continued to advance.

Again Bruce bade them stay their steps, and again his commands were disregarded.

Then the King, seeing that his words were of no avail, drew the boy's bow and hit the father in the eye. He fell like a stone. The elder son, seeing his father dead, rushed at Bruce with his battleaxe, but the King, raising his sword, with one blow cleft his head in twain. The remaining brother next made a run at him with his spear. Bruce waited till he was close up to him. With one "whisk" of his sword he cut the head off his spear, then before he had time to draw his weapon he dealt him a blow with his sword that struck him lifeless to the ground. When his page saw the three traitors lying dead, he came running up to him, and with tears in his eyes congratulated him on his victory.

"These men," said Bruce, quietly wiping the blood off his brand, "were worthy men and might have lived long and honourable lives; but their treason has wrought their confusion."

The other story is this.

Having given the greater part of his men permission to go into the country around to procure provisions, he was left one night with only sixty in his company. Hearing that the Gallowegians were in pursuit of him with three sleuth-hounds, he removed with his little following to a piece of dry ground in the midst of a marsh, where he thought they might pass the night in

safety. To reach this place they had to cross a stream by a ford so narrow that only two could pass over at a once. This ford Bruce undertook to guard during the night. He would not allow any of his men to remain with him. Even the two servants who accompanied him to the river side, he bade return and take their rest. It was a lovely night,—"the moon was shining right clearly." Everything was calm and still and peaceful, and the ripple of the running stream invited to slumber and repose. But the Bruce had not retired there for rest.

The first hours of his watch he spent in examining the river banks with the view of discovering whether there was any other fordable part of the stream by which the enemy might cross. Having satisfied himself as to this, he returned, and, concealing himself, lay down at his post. Soon on the other side of the stream he heard the "quhistling" of a hound tracking his footsteps to the entrance to the ford. Peering out of his hiding-place, he could see it working backwards and forwards, and then his foes appeared, two hundred in number, all well horsed and armed! For a moment Bruce hesitated whether to return to his camp, which was two bow-draughts off, or to meet them single-handed. But it was only for a moment. The next, with sword in hand, he was standing waiting for his enemies on the bank of the stream. Perceiving him, they dashed into the water with a shout. The first man who came against him he struck down with his spear. The next had his horse speared under him. The wound caused the animal to rear, and when it came to the bank it slipped and fell, causing an obstacle in the way of all who followed. Twice in

the course of that desperate fight the enemy tried to bear him down by force. But he defended himself stoutly. At every stroke a foeman fell. Soon the head of the ford was cumbered with bodies, both of men and horses. Every horse and man that fell was an additional bulwark to the lion-hearted King, till at length his enemies saw that their success was hopeless. Deeply mortified, they turned their horses' heads and rode away. When, awakened by the noise of the conflict, his men came rushing up to him, they found the King sitting alone by the banks of the river with his basnet off, "for he was hot," with fourteen dead bodies stretched stiff and gory by his side.

To this same period of his "vassalage" belongs the story of Bruce's escape from the bloodhound, so often quoted as illustrative of his coolness in the hour of extreme peril.

His mortal foe, John of Lorn, with a company of well-armed men, five hundred strong, had been—in league with Odomar de Valence, and a more bloodthirsty enemy still, a powerful sleuth-hound—ranging the country in search of him, when one day they caught sight of him some little distance off. Bruce, who was attended only by his foster-brother, had seen them also. He immediately plunged into a thicket near by, and being utterly exhausted, threw himself down to rest. But soon the baying of the hound which he heard in the distance convinced him that his whereabouts was discovered. His fatigue was so great that it was with some difficulty he was persuaded by his foster-brother to remove from the spot where he was lying; the more so that, with the hound at his heels, escape seemed almost impossible. But at last he did so. Hastily de-

scending the hill, he found himself in a valley through which ran a stream of running water. Like an inspiration it occurred to him that he had heard that the scent of these hounds extended no further than a bow-draught in running water. He mentioned this to his companion, and suggested that they should prove if it was so. Plunging into the stream, followed by his foster-brother, he waded down the middle of its channel till he thought he had traversed the requisite distance; then, regaining the dry land, he once more betook himself to the recesses of the woods. His device was successful. When the hound came to the spot where the fugitives had entered the stream, it wavered and began running backwards and forwards in search of the lost scent. Lorn knew at once that he had "tynt this travale." He called back his men, and thus once again Bruce escaped his foes.

But his perils were not over even for the day.

When Bruce and his foster-brother emerged from the wood they saw stretching before them a long, bare, naked moor, through which their weary course lay. Tired though they were, they manfully set themselves to cross it.

Half-way across they met three men, all of them armed, and one of them carrying over his shoulder a sheep, which, judging from their looks, it was more than probable they had stolen. They accosted the King civilly enough, and in reply to his question where they were going, they answered that they were in search of Robert the Bruce, being desirous to become his men.

"If that is the case," said the King, "come along with me, and I'll show you where he is."

So they walked on together. But in a little while

Bruce, who was far from prepossessed by their appearance, began to entertain doubts as to the innocence of their intentions.

"Look here," he said, "my good fellows! I think, till we are all better acquainted, you three will walk on in front by yourselves, and I and my man will follow after."

The men remonstrated with him on the injustice of his suspicion. But Bruce was firm, and in the end they agreed. Towards nightfall they came to a deserted crofter's cottage, and there a halt was called. The men, who were no doubt as tired and hungry as the King, proposed that they should cook their sheep, and they offered Bruce a part of it.

He accepted gratefully. But even this civility failed to allay his fears. He insisted that the two parties should remain distinct. He and his companion would occupy one end of the cottage, the three men the other, the sheep should be cut in two, and two fires lighted to cook it.

It was pretty plain to the men by this time who their suspicious fellow-traveller was; it was equally plain to Bruce that they were traitors, bent on slaying him. But it was necessary for both to dissemble their real sentiments, and accordingly to this strange proposal of the King no serious opposition was offered.

At supper Bruce ate like the famished man that he was, and naturally after his meal he began to feel drowsy and sleepy.

"Did his foster-brother," he asked, "think that he could keep awake till he had snatched a hasty spell of repose?"

His foster-brother replied that he could; but of

course the moment Bruce went over, he fell asleep also. Bruce, like every strong healthy man, was a heavy sleeper; but this night, conscious of his danger, he slept, says Barbour, "as lightly as foul on twist" (twig). It was well that he did; for scarcely had he fallen asleep when the traitors approached him with their swords drawn. The noise they made awakened the King, who, starting up, immediately perceived his danger. But he had time to draw his sword and to waken his foster-brother, which he did by trampling on him heavily with his foot. The poor man, however, was slain before he had even time to grasp the situation. The next moment Bruce was engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with his assailants. "Throu Goddis grace and his manhood," says Barbour piously, it ended in his victory. But Bruce, when he told the story in after years, never forgot to add that it was the greatest peril to which he had ever been exposed.

"Wae and angry," but with the three corpses of his foes stretched alongside that of his foster-brother, Bruce left the cottage where he had met with such sorry treatment, and, late though it was, proceeded to make for the farm-house which he had named as the trysting-place with his followers.

He reached it at last; but when he entered it he found no one but an old woman, the "gudewife" of the farm, seated in the centre beside the smouldering embers of an expiring peat fire. With the curiosity of her age and sex she at once began to ask him who he was, whence he had come, and where he was going.

"A travelling man," Bruce replied, "a sort of 'gangrel body,' without home, and with no very clearly defined occupation."

"All travellers are welcome," said the dame, "for the sake of one."

"And who may that be?" inquired the King, seating himself on a low stool by her side.

"Our rightful lord, Robert the Bruce," she made answer, "who, though his foes now hold him in thrall, will one day be so firmly seated on his throne that not a single man will venture to stand up against him."

Then Bruce told her who he was; but the old woman would scarcely believe him.

"Where are your men then?" she asked.

"For the moment," he replied, "I have none." Then he told her all that had befallen him.

"Nay," she answered warmly, "but that must not be;" and, calling for her two sons, she made them swear "to become his men," and never to leave him till he had safely rejoined his companions.

But at that moment a great noise and stamping of horses was heard outside the house.

Alarmed at the noise, Bruce and the other inmates of the cottage started to their feet, determined to sell their lives dearly. But a well-known voice fell on the King's ear.

Flying to the door, the King threw it open. The next minute he was in the arms of "the Good Lord James," his brother Edward, and a hundred and fifty of his most devoted and trusty adherents.

His reunion with Douglas was the dawn of a brighter day.

The tide was now about to turn, and from this date Bruce's career is the record, not of ever-recurring privations and defeats, but of one little success after another, till it ends in the crowning victory of Bannockburn.

THE GOOD LORD JAMES.

G W Wilson Photo

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ROXBURGH CASTLE.

The Good Lord James.

I.

Among the many remarkable instances of manly friendship recorded in history, none was ever more eminently beneficial to the country which produced it than that of King Robert the Bruce and his life-long friend and counsellor "the Good Lord James."

If at a later period of its annals the family of Douglas was often a danger and a menace to the State, while the battle of Scottish freedom was being fought it was ever the very reverse. Sir William the Hardy, or, as he is called by Hume of Godscroft, William Long Leg,—the father of the good "Sir James," performed much the same services and stood in much the same relation to Wallace that his son afterwards did to Robert the Bruce. The value of the work done in his day and generation by the father has perhaps been overshadowed by the more evident practical utility of that done by the son. But this at least is certain,—both in what he did and the way in which he did it, the son only followed the example of the father, and had there been no William the Hardy, there would have been no James the Good, and the family of Douglas would never have risen to the eminence of power and authority which it afterwards so remarkably did.

Always, on this side of the Border at least, regarded as the ideal knight—the knight *sans peur et sans reproche*—of Scottish chivalry, on the other side of the marches he bore, and perhaps still bears, a very different character. There the Black Douglas, as he was called, was a name to frighten children with. The stories, some of them still extant, which circulated round the blazing watch-fires of the Border keeps, and the cheerful hearths of Northumberland and Westmoreland in the long winter evenings, depicted him as something between a giant and an ogre—a grim, cruel, and terror-inspiring being—a personage whose counterpart is, nowadays at least, only to be found in a child's book of fairy tales. So far as his personal appearance was concerned, there was a certain degree of verisimilitude in the description. Whatever he may have been in his youth, Barbour admits that after middle age his good looks were nothing to boast of. Tall, gaunt and swarthy, "in visage some deal grey," he had broad shoulders, long limbs, and "great bones." And in battle his ferocity both of action and countenance was enough to terrify the bravest man. But the grim Douglas had another side to his character. "When he was blythe he was lovely and meek and sweet in company," and when he spoke it was with a slight lisp, which Barbour naïvely admits "set him right wondrous well." We have already seen how kind and cheery and considerate and debonair he could be to ladies, or to the companions of his wanderings and privations. As for his affection and loyalty to the King, it had its match only in the friendship of David and Jonathan.

Yet, as we shall presently see, he could be very cruel on occasion—barbarous even we might be inclined to

say, judging him from a nineteenth century point of view. But his cruelty and his barbarity were not so much characteristic of the man as of the rough times in which he lived; and if we cannot altogether acquit him of the charge, this at least deserves to be kept in view in mitigation of our censure.

One of the most characteristic instances of his "manhood," as the old chroniclers call it, is his capture of his ancestral castle and the savage holocaust he made of his English prisoners on that occasion. The story is well known under the name of the "Douglas Larder." But it will bear retelling. It was in 1307. Bruce was in Carrick—"his own country" as he always called it—endeavouring, though with but little success, to rouse the country side. One day Douglas came to the King, and asked his permission to absent himself for a time. He was anxious, he said, to make a journey into Douglasdale to see how things were going on there. Douglas Castle, the chief seat of his house, was in the hands of the English, and it annoyed him, he explained, to see the Cliffords so peaceably enjoying and holding the houses and lands that of right were his own. Moreover he was longing for a little excitement. Adventure was the breath of his nostrils. The tame life he was presently leading was telling upon his energies and his spirits. He entreated the King to let him go.

Bruce at first tried to dissuade him. But Douglas was importunate, and in the end the King gave his consent. But he made him promise that if any evil befell him he would let Bruce know at once—

> "And then," added the King, "together we shall face,
> Whatever fate may fall."

Taking only two trusty servants with him, Douglas started on his journey. Arrived in Douglasdale, he betook himself with his companions to the farm of one Thomas Dickson, an old retainer of his family—a substantial yeoman—"mighty of friends" and rich in nolt and kine. The old man wept for joy when Douglas told him who he was, and gladly gave him shelter in his house. Little by little, by Dickson's aid, the news of his arrival was spread abroad among those—and they were many—who still adhered to the old lords of Douglas Castle. Night after night, round the blazing ingle of Dickson's farm-"hall," the Douglas' faithful vassals assembled and discussed with their lord how best they could drive the hated English from the lands they had usurped. Finally they agreed upon a plan.

On Palm Sunday the whole English garrison of Douglas Castle, thirty in number, with the exception of a porter and a cook who remained behind, the one to guard the gate, the other to prepare the soldiers' midday dinner, left the Castle to celebrate the great festival of the day in the little church of St. Bride hard by. It had been agreed that Douglas, in the disguise of a labourer, bearing a flail over his shoulder, should be there too, and that when he threw off his cloak his adherents should rise and massacre the whole English garrison assembled within the sacred building. But before they had all taken their places in church, and before Douglas himself had arrived, some over-zealous vassal raised the ominous cry of "A Douglas! A Douglas!" A general melée ensued, in which old Thomas Dickson was killed. The English garrison in the chancel defended themselves bravely. But such was Douglas' prowess, and such the spirit he infused

into his followers, that not a single English soldier escaped. Those who were not killed were taken prisoners.

After this victory Douglas with his company set out for the castle. They found the gate standing open. As for the poor affrighted porter and cook, they did not attempt the slightest resistance. Then Douglas with his "menyhe" entered his ancestral home. In the great hall they found the cloth laid on the trestled tables; and, dinner being ready, their first proceeding was to sit down and make a hearty and leisurely meal. Then they proceeded to ransack the premises. Everything that was "tursive" or portable—weapons, arms, silver plate, and clothing—they made up into bundles to carry away. But all the victuals—the wheat, the flour, the meal, and the malt—with the exception of salt—a valuable commodity in those days, and for which Douglas had another use—they piled on the floor of the wine-cellar by their leader's orders. That done, Douglas gathered together all the prisoners he had taken and beheaded them in the cellar. Then he ordered the heads to be knocked off the great tuns of wine and ale that were standing in it, and let their contents run out and mingle with the blood of his victims. Finally, having removed all that he thought worth carrying away, he poisoned the castle well by filling it with dead horses and the salt that he had reserved for this purpose; set fire to the castle and everything within it, and went his victorious way. He knew he had no chance of retaining the castle. As for himself, he "loved better to hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak."

The English rebuilt and regarrisoned the castle, of

course. But if they expected Douglas was going to let them "bruik" it in peace they were much mistaken. He allowed them to complete it without let or hindrance. But no sooner was this done than he determined to give them another lesson on the precariousness of their tenure of his possessions.

The captain of the garrison was a brave Englishman named Thirlwall. But Thirlwall's "manhood" was nowhere when pitted against Douglas' craft. Shortly after daybreak one morning the news was brought him that the rascally Scotch cattle-stealers had been at their old tricks again. Thirlwall hastened to the battlements and from that *coign de vantage* he saw, sure enough, a drove of his choicest kine disappearing in the distance in charge of a party of armed free-booters. He immediately ordered the signal "to horse and saddle" to be sounded; and soon the gallant Englishman, boiling over with indignation, was pricking across the moor in pursuit of the reivers, with the greater part of his garrison behind him. He found the thieves, however, not quite so easy to overtake as he had supposed. Before he knew where he was, he discovered he was at some distance from the castle, and that between him and it there had suddenly uprisen, as if by magic, a considerable body of armed men, cutting him off from his base of operations. Thirlwall at once saw that he had been entrapped. He had walked straight into the snare which the cunning Douglas had set for him the night before. The armed men whom he now saw behind him had sprung from their ambush as soon as Thirlwall and his men had passed by, and now those in front turned and faced him also. There was nothing for it but to fight. This he did with great gallantry,

but with the only result that could be expected. Some, however, of Thirlwall's party managed to escape. A few of them reached the castle in safety. But as soon as they had entered the gates were barred; and Douglas' men when they came up were fain to content themselves with killing all those who were unfortunate enough to have been shut out, and with seizing anything they could lay their hands on outside the castle walls. "Syne they went their way."

More successful was Douglas' attack on Roxburgh Castle. This great fortress, one of the four principal strongholds of early Scotland—the others being Edinburgh, Stirling, and Berwick—stood on a neck of land formed by the junction of the Tweed and the Teviot, close to Kelso, almost, if not quite, the prettiest of our Scotch country towns. Nothing now remains to mark its site but a green mound and a few shapeless stones, and we can but guess at its appearance. But it seems to have been like other thirteeth-century castles, a huge fortified enclosure, quadrilateral in shape, with towers protected by embrasures at its angles, a rampart walk round its walls and a deep moat filled with water lying at its feet. This seemingly impregnable fastness Douglas cleverly captured in the year 1313.

It was Fastern's Eve, the night on which good Catholics bid adieu to all the good things of this world preparatory to entering on their forty days Lenten fast, and the English soldiers and officers of the garrison, "with gamyn and dancing and playing," were carelessly carousing in the great hall within, when one of the sentinels on the ramparts perceived certain black objects creeping about among the trees which studded the park at the foot of the castle walls.

"Ah!" said he to his fellow, "these are Farmer So-and-So's cattle" (naming a certain husbandman of the district.) "He has left them out to-night. Fine cheer he must be making when he has even forgotten to take in his kine!"

"No doubt," replied the other, "And fine cheer he'd go on making even if Douglas were to come to-night and drive them all away!"

Little did they know that the supposed oxen were no other than the redoubtable Douglas himself, with sixty of his bravest and most experienced soldiers, disguised by black cloaks thrown over their armour, and creeping on their hands and feet. Little did they reck, too, that under each man's cloak was a rope ladder with wooden rungs and strong crooks of iron to fasten into the crevices of the walls—the work of "Sym of the Ledous," a man "richt craftyous" in all such inventions —and that by means of these "hempen rapis" they and all their fellows would be at the mercy of the awful Black Douglas before many minutes were elapsed. Yet this was precisely what happened.

Approaching slowly, like a herd of cattle grazing, to the foot of the walls, Douglas' men managed to fasten their ladders into the stonework without being either heard or perceived. The next moment Simon Ledehouse, who mounted first, found himself on a level with the castle ramparts. But the watch of that ward was on the alert, and no sooner had his head appeared above the wall than he made a rush at Ledehouse, intending to hurl him down. Ledehouse, however, was on his guard. Without uttering a noise, or cry, or sound, he caught the man by the neck and ripped him open with a knife which he carried in his hand. Then he cast the

body over the wall, and leaning over the ramparts called to his fellows to come up. This they were not slow to do. But before they could ascend to his assistance, Ledehouse had again to fight for his life. Another watchman appeared, and seeing a black figure in the dark which he knew was not one of their men, he immediately ran to attack him. But Ledehouse was armed and the man was not. The poor soldier fell at once before the sturdy armourer's stroke. A life more or less was of no account when there was a great stronghold to be taken.

Then Douglas and his men arrived, and the next moment the terrible cry of "A Douglas! A Douglas!" was being echoed from every ward and quarter of the fortress. A scene of fearful confusion and carnage ensued. Forth from the great banqueting hall rushed an orderless crowd of half-drunk and alarmed roysterers. Forth from their lodgings in the courtyard came shrieking women and terrified children. Forth from tower and turret, from keep and guardhouse, issued scared and half-armed men. Cries and imprecations resounded on every side. Hoarse voices shrieked orders which never were obeyed, and were lost amid the din of clashing swords and the groans of the dying and the wounded.

At length, when it was pretty plain that not the safety of the fortress but the safety of their own lives was the only thing to be considered, the Warden of the castle, a gallant Burgundian knight named Guillemin de Fiennes, collecting as many of the garrison as he could, made a rush towards the great tower and barricaded himself in. It was the most impregnable part of an almost impregnable stronghold, and with the force

and means at his disposal Douglas saw at once that its capture, if possible at all, was not to be made in a single night. But though he desisted from the attack that night, he had no intention of giving it up altogether. Next day, and for several days thereafter, attempts were made to dislodge the garrison. Showers of arrows were directed against any one who ventured to show his face on barbican or at loophole. In one of them de Fiennes himself was grievously wounded in the face. Then, and not till then, did the English garrison consider it time to yield. The next day they surrendered. But they were allowed to go out with all the honours of war. Douglas himself conveyed them to the Border. As for poor de Fiennes, he died very shortly after. Roxburgh Castle was soon after, by Bruce's orders, demolished; and "tour, castle, and donjon tumbled down;" and with its destruction all Teviotdale, with the exception of Jedburgh and one or two other towns and villages near the English border, "came into the King's peace."

We must anticipate events by many a long year, to relate one other incident—the last and noblest of all—in the life of the "Good Lord James."

The scene this time is the little castle of Cardross, about four miles from the present town of Dumbarton. The date is the 7th June 1329.

In one of its dark, stone-walled, tapestry hung rooms, on a little pallet bed, covered with a rich silken coverlet, surrounded by his lords, and captains, and men-at-arms, the great Bruce—"the noblest Roman of them all"—lies a-dying. He has made his testament, settled all his worldly affairs, commended his soul to God. Already the mists of death are clouding his eyes; but he turns

them from side to side, seeking amongst that crowd of sorrowful faces one face, the dearest and best loved of all—the face of that friend who, through youth and manhood and old age, through good report and through bad report, has clung to him with a love greater than that of a brother. At last he finds it. It is the face of the "Good Lord James." He beckons him to him, draws his face to his own, kisses him, then as he kneels by his bedside takes his hand between both of his. In tones so low that he is heard by none but him for whom his words were intended, he proffers his last request. Many sins, he said, he had committed in his lifetime, much innocent blood he had spilled, many a soul he had sent in a moment, "unhouseled, unanealed, with all its imperfections on its head," to give its account before the dread judgment-seat of God. Yet through it all, the thought had ever been present to his mind that, if God willed, he would seek absolution for all his manifold offences by ending his days fighting against God's foes in the Holy Land. God had not so willed. Nevertheless he had arranged with his knights and council that after his death one of their number would carry his dead heart thither, since his living body could not go; and their choice had fallen on his life-long friend. Would he undertake the task? Then Douglas, still on his knees by the King's bedside, briefly answered that he would, and the King thanked him tenderly. And of all that great company there was not one who did not weep for pity at the sight.

The King was no sooner dead than Douglas began to make preparations for his mission. His first care was to enshrine the Bruce's heart in a costly case of

silver, and to suspend it round his neck; his next to arrange his temporal concerns and to select his companions. All these weighty matters being at last settled to his satisfaction, he embarked at Berwick, with a noble company of knights and squires.

After a tempestuous voyage he arrived at Seville the Grand, where he was received with the greatest distinction. The King of Spain sent for him and offered him gold and treasure, arms and horses. But the Douglas refused all his gifts. The English knights who were there treated him with the utmost respect, and would fain have joined themselves to his retinue. But the Douglas, courteously thanking them, declined the proffered honour. His modest, reserved, dignified bearing won him the respect not only of that proud and stately court, but of all who came in contact with him. Once when a foreign knight, with a face all scarred and disfigured with many an honourable wound, asked him how it was that he, one of the greatest captains in Christendom, who had seen so much fighting from his youth upward, had not a single scar or blemish on his, he meekly replied that, thanks to God, he had always had a pair of hands to protect it. But every one who looked on it could see that tall, silent, grey-visaged man carried about him, though unseen, a wound deeper and more incurable than any the chattering knight could show, the wound occasioned by the severance of a loved and life-long friendship.

It chanced that at this time Spain was called upon to resist one of those periodical attacks of the Saracens, which add such a picturesque interest to the history of that beautiful country. Douglas, like the old warhorse that he was, pricked up his ears at the prospect

of coming battle, especially since that battle was directed against the Pagan Moors, the sworn enemies of his God and his religion. He offered his services to the King of Spain, and they were eagerly accepted. At the battle of Theba, on the borders of Andalusia, Douglas led the van, the Grand Master of St. Jacques the second "battle," while the King of Spain contented himself with commanding the rear. The Moorish cavalry took to flight and were pursued by Douglas and a small body of troops for a considerable distance. But observing how few accompanied the great captain (they had dwindled to ten by this time), they rallied and summoned up courage to act on the offensive. Douglas and his little company were at this time undoubtedly hard pressed, but they managed to escape from their assailants. At that moment, perceiving Sir William St. Clair of Roslin, one of the knights who had accompanied him from Scotland, being vigorously attacked by a large body of Moors in another part of the field, Douglas rushed to his assistance. But the aid he was able to bring him was unavailing. Before he knew where he was, he found himself hemmed in by a seething angry crowd of turbaned enemies, brave as only men can be who are fighting for their faith. Then Douglas knew that his hour was come. Removing the Bruce's heart from his neck, he flung it before him into the midst of his foes, exclaiming in a loud voice as he did so. "Go before, brave heart, as thou wert wont to do! Douglas will follow thee or die!" Then spurring his horse, he rushed forward, and was slain.

When the Scots went to take up the body of their great commander, they found it covering—at least so says tradition—the dead heart of their King.

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.

J. Skinner & Co

KING ROBERT BRUCE.

The Fight for Freedom.

I.

When in the early summer of 1313 the curtain rises on the last act of the heroic drama of Scottish freedom, Edward Bruce, the King's brother, with the troops under his command, is discovered sitting down before the walls of Stirling Castle—the only one, except Berwick, of the great fortresses of the Kingdom which still remained in possession of Edward II., the English King.

But the siege makes little progress, owing very likely to the inexperience of the besiegers in such matters. The Scots have no intention, however, of relaxing their grip of the fortress. Sooner or later, if it does not surrender to their attacks, it is certain to yield to a stronger enemy still,—to famine, with its attendant handmaids, disorganisation and disease.

Its constable, Sir Philip Mowbray, a Scotsman in the service of England, knows this too. Accordingly he makes the proposition to Sir Edward that he shall be permitted to go and report matters to his sovereign in England, and that if King Edward is unable to relieve it before the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist—the 24th June 1314—he will forthwith surrender it to the King of Scotland. Such a bargain,

however opposed to prudence, even to common sense, it may now seem to us, being in strict accordance with the fantastic notions of chivalry prevalent in those days, Bruce consents, and proceeds to draw off his troops.

But his brother, when Sir Edward reported to him what he had done, did not by any means see the matter in the same light. He soundly rated him for entering into so foolish an agreement.

"If you had only let things take their course," said the King, "the castle would have been ours before the year was out. Don't you see what you've done. You've given Edward the chance of getting together an army large enough to crush us. However," he added sadly, "the thing's done, and can't be undone. Our work now is to prepare to meet the King of England and the gigantic host he is sure to bring against us."

It turned out exactly as King Robert had said.

Edward, who of late had been rapidly awakening to the fact that the robe of Scottish sovereignty, on which his father had set so much store, was dropping off his shoulders, eagerly seized this pretext for ending—as he believed, once and for all—the now long-continued and irritating rebellion of the Scots. He issued his summons for the gathering of his feudal host at Berwick on the 10th June of the following year. He ordered the attendance of his vassals from Gascony and from Ireland; he hired troops from Flanders and other foreign states. Never before in the whole course of his existence had he shown himself so interested or so energetic. It was a nuisance, no doubt, to have to rise from his pleasures, buckle on his armour, and get together an army. But seeing it had to be done, it was as well to do it properly

when he was at it. He would collect such a force that it would be impossible to resist. Fifty thousand men would doubtless be sufficient to punish or even to exterminate these miserable Scots. But to make assurance doubly sure, he would raise a hundred thousand or more, and of them at least forty thousand would be cavalry. The whole of England was turned into a camp. Every inland city and burgh was called upon to discharge its legal obligations by providing soldiers or supplies for the King's host. Every seaport town was ordered to equip its quota of vessels to augment his fleet.

Meantime the poor Scots were straining every nerve to muster an army; but the very utmost they could do was as nothing when compared with the hosts of England. Taking the most liberal computation, Bruce's force at the battle of Bannockburn amounted to no more than thirty thousand fighting men!

On the 18th June 1314 Edward left Berwick with his army and held on towards Edinburgh.

Never since Scotland had been a kingdom had such a magnificent host been seen within her borders. Over hill and dale, through forest and brake, by the side of its burns and rivers, across its barren moors, it held its glittering way. One would have thought from its appearance that it was a royal progress—a pageant or a triumph—rather than an angry suzerain going to punish his rebellious vassals. The most vivid imagination, however accustomed to modern pageantry and splendour, fails adequately to realise the gorgeousness, the brilliancy of the spectacle. A long thin line, like a twisted strand of all the colours of the rainbow, extending mile after mile, of standards and banners,

emblazoned in gold and silver, of silken pennons and streamers of dazzling hues fluttering in the wind, of gaily caparisoned horses, bestridden by knights whose gold and silver plate-armour reflected the sheen of the morning sun, of spearmen, billmen, and archers—each troop more richly and gallantly equipped than the preceding. First, in all probability, came a troop of horsemen; then several squadrons of archers; then the King, with his principal knights about him, heading the main line of his cavalry; then troop after troop of infantry, divided by small companies of horsemen; then the commissariat and camp equipage, borne on sumpter mules and in sumpter waggons, or in rude vehicles drawn by oxen, mules, and horses; then the sutlers and camp followers—a multitude that no man could number—carrying with them their whole household goods and gear, their bedding and their clothing, their pots and pans, pigs and poultry, and accompanied in many instances

"With wyfe and barne and mony laborous men."

For so thoroughly had England discounted its victory, so confident was Edward's army that it had only to come, to see, and to conquer, that large numbers of honest, industrious, hard-working men—small tradesmen, tillers of the soil, and the like—men with large families and limited means, who saw in emigration their only chance of bettering their position—attached themselves to it, never doubting that they were journeying to a Land of Promise, where prosperity awaited them with outstretched arms.

Amongst this heterogeneous crowd was a traveller of another description, whose presence deserves a passing

notice. This was Robert Baston, a Carmelite friar of Scarborough, an esteemed maker of Latin poetry, who had been commanded by Edward to attend him in order that his triumph might be handed down to future generations in appropriate verse. We shall hear more of Robert Baston in the sequel.

News of the English army's advance was not long in reaching King Robert. Fortunately he was prepared for it. He gathered his troops together at the Torwood, a long stretch of forest, holt, and scrub—now entirely eradicated—extending from a few miles north-west of Falkirk to the little village of St. Ninians, near Stirling. It had been a favourite refuge of Wallace and his men in their days of discomfiture and danger. Here he remained till Friday, the 21st June. There was no hurry to press forward. The battlefield Bruce had already selected was only a few miles away.

The country between the Torwood and Stirling presented then a very different appearance to what it does at the present day. Instead of well-drained fields and cultivated haughs, its general appearance was wild and waste and barren. The higher ground was bare moor, the slopes and hillsides were covered with rough brake and brushwood. The haughs were morasses tufted with heather, swamps full of black peaty moss and stagnant water, which for half the year at least were impassable for man and beast. Even in summer in some places this was still the case. The two great bogs known as Halbert's and the Milton Bogs, of which we shall have more to say hereafter, were actual lakes, the haunt of snipe and wild duck, while the ground around them was full of "joggle-beds" and "well-eyes," which for centuries after were a terror to the small farmers whose

beasts were constantly straying over them in search of fresh grass, and sinking, never to be recovered. All this land has now been drained and reclaimed.

But here and there amidst this treacherous tract were stretches of dry ground, some of them of considerable extent. One of these had been chosen by Bruce for the scene of the coming engagement.

It was about two miles from Stirling, and close to the little village of St. Ninians. It was part of the New Park—a tract of uncultivated land, comprising hill, dale, lake, and stream, reserved by the Scottish monarchs as a "forest," in which to pursue their favourite pastime of hunting when residing at Stirling Castle. The actual battlefield was the Bannock Moor, and never had ground been selected with more consummate judgment. The back-ground was formed by gently swelling hills; in front, among soil and slake, ran the little stream called the Bannock Burn, which Hollingshed tells us—though the reader need not believe him unless he likes—was "so named of oten cakes called bannocks, which were used to bee made commonlie at the mils standing on the banks of the said water." On the one side was a hill; on the other the watery morass which we have already referred to under the name of Halbert's Bog.

Within the compass of many miles there was not a more strongly protected position, nor one better adapted for Bruce's purpose. For the Scotch army was mainly composed of infantry, while a considerable portion of that of the English consisted of cavalry, and the clumps of trees on the Bannock Moor, and the open swamps and water-courses below, would be as great a protection to soldiers fighting on foot as they were

bound to be a cumbrance and annoyance to those who fought on horseback.

To this judiciously selected position, or rather to the heights above it, Bruce, on Saturday, 22d June, conducted his army. His first care after his arrival was to take steps to prevent the English throwing troops into Stirling Castle without his knowledge. The chances were they would advance through the New Park in the hope of doing this. But, except by one little piece of dry ground close to but not actually within the projected battlefield, this was impossible. They were bound either to be stopped by morasses or intercepted by the Scottish army. This spot Bruce now proceeded to close up in a way which few but himself would have thought of, though it was as old as the days of Herodotus. He set his men to work to riddle it with "pot-holes"—round pits a foot in diameter, and sufficiently deep to break a horse's legs if it fell into them. These were covered with branches of trees. Then the turf was relaid. So closely were these "pots" made, that when the work was finished the ground looked "like a wax comb that the bees make." That was all that was done that day. Their task completed, Bruce ordered his troops to rest. He himself, we are told, slept little that night.

II.

THE following day—the 23d June—was Sunday, but it was not destined to be a day of rest. Being the vigil of St. John the Baptist, it was observed as a rigorous fast. The day began with the solemn celebration of mass in presence of the King and his whole army. That over, Bruce proceeded to inspect the pits which his soldiers had made the day before; and then, as there was still no appearance of the English, he ordered what may be called a "dress rehearsal" of the coming conflict. He made all his troops arm themselves, and take up the positions on the ground that he had assigned to them. Then he addressed them in a few earnest words of encouragement and exhortation, concluding by ordering proclamation to be made that all who feared their hearts would fail them in the day of battle should depart at once, as he wished to have none with him but those who were resolved to stand by him to the end,

"And tak the ure (destiny) that God would send."

A great shout went up when the herald had ended making this announcement. But not a single man left his ranks.

The troops were then ordered back to their camp on the heights.

The King's next care was to remove all non-combatants from the ground. Attached to his army was a perfect host of camp-followers, sutlers, servants, hangers-on, and idlers of all descriptions, ranks, and ages—they are said to have numbered close upon twenty thousand—who, as may well be imagined, were very much in the

way. These he now desired to pack up their baggage and be gone; but as he had a use for them, as we shall presently see, he ordered them to withdraw to a little valley behind a height now known as the Gillies' Hill, where they were pretty certain to find some means of seeing the fight without being themselves seen.

The forenoon was now advancing, still no English appeared.

Bruce began to get anxious. What if after all they managed to give him the slip? What if they succeeded in relieving Stirling Castle despite all his precautions?

Growing every moment more uneasy and fidgety, he ordered Randolph to take a troop of horsemen and occupy the ground close to the Kirk of St. Ninians, so as to command the approach to the castle. At the same time he despatched Sir James Douglas and Sir Robert Keith, "that then was marshall of all the host," to the entrance to the Torwood to see if they could discover any signs of their dilatory foes.

The two knights departed on their mission. They had not gone far when they came in sight of the enemy, and never had they seen a more gorgeous, or, for the matter of that, a more awe-inspiring spectacle. "In every direction to the south-east, so far as the openings amid trees extended, shields, helmets, and lances innumerable were everywhere sparkling in the rays of the sun, banners, standards, and the pennons attached to whole forests of spears waved in the breeze. The gorgeous and rich dresses in almost every bright colour, worn by countless knights, were dazzling to behold, while squadrons beyond counting, on horse and foot, far as the eye could discern, might suffice to impress with awe the most mighty power in Christendom."

After gazing at the scene for a moment or two, Douglas and Keith put spurs into their horses, and galloped back to make their report to the King.

They found him with a few of his principal captains on the top of Coxet Hill.

Bruce knew very well the dispiriting effect the announcement of the real state of the case would make on his impressionable soldiers. Accordingly he gave out that the enemy, though numerous, were advancing in the greatest disorder, and then, without giving them time to discuss the matter among themselves, he set about marshalling his battalions on the field in battle array.

While this operation was in progress, Bruce detected a troop of English horsemen, some eight hundred strong, stealing along under shelter of the trees in the New Park in the direction of the castle. He immediately galloped up to Randolph, who was on the lower ground, and told him what had happened, adding in tones of grave displeasure that "a rose had fallen from his chaplet." Stung by the reproach, Randolph started instantly in pursuit. He came up upon Sir Robert Clifford, the English commander, at a spot half-way between St. Ninians and Stirling, now known by the name of Randolph's Field. The English faced round, and a desperate conflict ensued. The English attacked first, but the Scots, forming themselves into a circle with their long spears protruded in front, resisted all their assaults. Again and again the English attempted to break their ranks, but without success. Then, in the madness of their rage and fury, they flung their swords, daggers, and maces amongst them, till a perfect pile of weapons rose in their midst. Half-choked and half-blinded by the dust, which rose in clouds, though they

were, with the perspiration streaming from both horses and men, the Scots fought gallantly on. The harder they were pressed, the more resolutely they resisted. They knew the eyes of their king and of the whole Scottish nation were upon them. Whatever might be the result, they were determined to do their duty.

There was a moment, however, when it looked as if they were about to yield. Douglas, who was standing not far from Bruce, watching the fight, observed this. As we have already mentioned, he and Randolph were on anything but friendly terms at the time. But when he saw how hard his rival was pressed, he approached the King, and earnestly beseeched him to let him take men and go to his assistance.

Bruce refused.

"Not a foot," he emphatically said, "should he stir. He would not break his order of battle for any one. If Randolph succeeded—well! If not, he must abide his fate."

"But, sir!" Douglas persisted, "I cannot stand here and see him cut down, when I could so easily render him aid."

"Go then," said Bruce, "but see you speed quickly back!"

So Douglas departed. But he had not gone far when he saw from the number of empty saddles that met his eyes, and from other tokens, that the tide of fortune had taken another turn, and that the English were on the point of being discomfited. He immediately called a halt.

"Randolph is winning," he exclaimed, "we must not spoil his victory."

Then he withdrew his men and returned to the King.

By this time the Scottish troops had taken up their position on the field of battle, and the army of the English was in sight. Then, for the first time, the

Scots knew the strength of the enemy whom they were about to engage. It might well have appalled them. Before them lay the pride of England in arms. Yet not a Scotch breast quailed.

Arrived "near to the place where Scottish men arrayed were," the main body of the English army halted. The van, however, knowing nothing of this, pressed on towards the park.

Meanwhile Bruce, mounted on a "gay palfrey, little and jolly," in full armour, with a light circlet of gold round his basinet, and a battle-axe in his hand, was busy riding up and down in front of his ranks marshalling his battalions. He was soon discovered and recognised by the English vanguard. Presently an English knight, Sir Henry de Bohun, was seen leaving the ranks and making towards the King, evidently with the intention of engaging him in combat. Bruce saw him too; but instead of retreating, as he—Scottish king and the leader of its host—ought to have done, he calmly let him approach. Bohun came galloping on, lance in rest, at full tilt. As soon as he came within attacking distance, Bruce, with a light turn of his wrist, turned his horse aside. Bohun passed him like an arrow. Then the King, rising in his stirrups, dealt the knight such a blow on the head with his battle-axe that his helmet was cleft in twain, and he fell dead on the ground. Such was the force of the blow that the handle of the King's axe was broken. A great shout rose up from his men as Bruce rode back to his troops. But his captains, when he had rejoined them, blamed him greatly for his temerity.

"What," they asked, with reason, "would have happened if, instead of being victorious, he had been

defeated? It would have been ruin not only to his army and his cause, but to his kingdom."

The King received their just rebuke in silence. But as he turned away, he remarked with a smile, "he was sorry for the loss of his good battle-axe."

So far the auspices had been in favour of the Scots. Nor was Bruce slow to take advantage of them. The return of Randolph with his victorious band a few minutes later gave him the opportunity, which no doubt he desired, of saying a few more words of encouragement and counsel to his soldiers.

As yet it was uncertain whether the English would attack that night or next morning, but the fact that this might be the last time on which he might ever address them, lent a solemnity to Bruce's words, which was both touching and impressive.

Beginning by congratulating them on Randolph's success, and expressing his belief that "good ending would follow this beginning," he put the question to them whether they should fight the English or not. He wished no one to peril his life out of consideration to himself. If they said "fight!"—fight they should. If they said "no," he would loyally carry out their will. All that he entreated was that they should speak out their minds clearly.

And they did,—in a manner that left no room for doubt. A great cry—the cry of a nation that was determined to be free—burst from the serried ranks, and echoed over the plain. And then his captains, coming to the front, begged the King that, without more delay, as soon as the sun was up the next morning, he would lead them against their hereditary foe.

The King gladly consented; but before he dismissed

the men to their rest—as by this time it was plain that the English would not fight till morning—he added a few further words of admonition and advice. He told them that right was on their side, and that God would fight for them; but at the same time he impressed upon them the necessity of never breaking the array, or going beyond the line of their comrades. He reminded them that the English attack would in all probability take the form of a cavalry charge, but they must be met with levelled spears, and breasts full of the wrongs that they had suffered at the hands of the English. He pointed to the splendid array of England over against them, and appealed to their own poverty. If victory was theirs, wealth, as well as honour and deathless fame, would be the reward of every one, even the humblest, among them. And he ended by saying that the heirs of all who fell in the fight should succeed to their father's estates, free of any of the then customary feudal fines of ward or relief.

Then the Scots retired to a wood in the rear, where they encamped for the night.

Once again Bruce had a sleepless night. But during the silent watches, tradition reports that an event occurred whose influence on the result of the next day's proceedings is not to be overlooked. Whether Bruce believed it or not, his soldiers unquestionably did, and they fought none the worse for believing it.

Amongst the precious relics in Bruce's possession, was the arm of St. Fillan the Leper, a celebrated Celtic saint well known for his holiness and for his intimacy with St. Columba, and whose memory is still revered in Perthshire, where he had his principal church. This relic, which was under the charge of his chaplain the

Abbot of Inchaffray, the King was in the habit of carrying about with him, enclosed in a silver shrine. But the Abbot, fearing that it might fall into the hands of the English, had left it behind him on the present occasion, and had brought with him only the empty casket; and this, as usual, had been placed in the tent of the King. But during the night, as Bruce was on his knees before the shrine, making his devotions to God and St. Fillan, the lid of the casket opened of itself, and lo! there was the sacred relic safe and sound. Then Bruce knew that whoever was against him, the Saint, at least, was on his side.

And in after times, when the battle was over and the victory won, people talked of other miraculous presages of success, which had been observed in different parts both of England and Scotland.

That same night there came to the door of the Abbey of Glastonbury, in England, two strange men who craved hospitality till morning. They were kindly received by the Abbot, who granted their request, and asked them who they were and where they were going. "Servants of God," they replied, "on their way to assist the Scots at Bannockburn." Before the gates were opened next morning the strangers were gone.

On the day of the battle, too, a knight clad in bright glistening armour proclaimed aloud in the streets of Aberdeen that the Scots had gained that day a glorious victory. Then he disappeared. But he was seen later on crossing the Pentland Firth on horseback, and this led people to believe that he was St. Magnus of Orkney, whose noble life and tragic death is one of the greatest glories of the annals of these distant and interesting islands.

III.

Long before daybreak on Monday, the 24th June 1314,—the day on which was destined to be fought the greatest battle that Scotland had ever seen, or was ever likely to see, so long as it was an independent kingdom,—both armies were up and doing.

So far as the Scots were concerned, the day began with an act than which nothing could be more expressive of the feelings with which they and all the rest of the nation regarded the coming conflict. By command of the King, his chaplain Maurice, Abbot of Inchaffray, celebrated a solemn mass in presence of all the army. Then breakfast, consisting of bread and wine, was served out to the troops.

That over, the troops in admirable order, and without the slightest appearance of trepidation or nervousness, commenced to march down and take up their position on the hill.

Bruce had divided his troops into three great "battles" or divisions—the first commanded by his brother Edward, the next by Randolph, and the third by Douglas and young Walter the Steward. When these had arrived on the ground they formed a somewhat oblique line extending from the high ground near the bend of the Bannock above Park Mill to the hollow north of Halbert's Bog. Sir Edward Bruce's division was somewhat nearer to the English than the other two. But the space between each division was small. It had been restricted on purpose to permit the passage of the English horse. Behind these three divisions, or rather on the high ground behind the one

commanded by his brother, was the reserve, commanded by the King in person. Nearly on a line with the reserve, but in such a position as to cover the open spaces, was a considerable band of Scottish archers. A little further on was the troop of five hundred horsemen that had played such havoc with Sir Robert Clifford and his party the day before.

The movements of the Scots naturally attracted the attention of the English.

"Will these men fight?" asked Edward, as he saw troop after troop deploying into order.

"Fight!" said Sir Ingram de Umfraville, an English knight who knew them well, "Yea, surely! and if your Majesty would take my advice, you would not meet them. Let us withdraw behind our tents and baggage as if retiring; they are certain to pursue. Then, when their lines are broken, we shall face round and attack them, and so secure a sure and safe victory."

"What! retreat!" exclaimed Edward, with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders, "before such a miserable rabble! Never shall I allow this to be said of me!"

But there were others in the King's suite who did not share the King's despicable opinion of the Scots. Already that morning the Earl of Gloucester had earnestly entreated the King at least to defer the fight till the following day. He knew that the English troops were in the worst possible condition for fighting. They had not sobered down to a proper appreciation of the enemy they were about to engage. More than that, they had spent the night in revelling and carousing, in vaunting their own strength and prowess, and drinking

merrily to the certain perdition of these miserable and infatuated Scots.

Gloucester's remonstrance was met by the King with a bitter taunt against the Earl's cowardice. Instigated, or at least encouraged, by a band of young captains who stood round him, he even forgot himself so far as to call him a traitor for his counsel.

"The day will show," exclaimed Gloucester, "whether I am either coward or traitor!" And he turned indignantly away.

By this time the whole of the Scotch army was in position, and the English were already in motion. But before the first division of the latter had crossed the Bannock Burn, the Abbot of Inchaffray, barefooted, clad in full sacerdotal robes, and bearing aloft, by way of standard, a crucifix attached to a pole, passed in front of the ranks of the Scots, and gave them his blessing.

All knelt.

"See, they kneel!" exclaimed Edward, whose eyes were fixed upon the scene, turning again to Umfraville. "They sue for mercy!"

"Ay, that they do, Sir!" replied the knight. "They sue for mercy, but not from you!"

Then Edward gave the signal to advance.

The van of the English under the Earls of Gloucester and Hereford immediately began to move forward. Flanked on the left by a large body of archers, they had no sooner reached the foot of the slope where the Scottish army stood waiting their approach, than they put spurs to their horses and at full gallop charged the right wing of the Scots commanded by Edward Bruce. But to their astonishment they failed to break their close array. The Scots stood firm as a rock. Again

and again the assault was repeated, but the result was always the same. After each onset the place of those who had fallen was filled up as if by mechanism. Every time the attack was made the English found themselves confronted by an unbroken line of levelled spears, which pierced their horses and emptied their saddles, and resolutely barred their approach to closer quarters. The English archers, too, from whom such great things were expected, failed miserably in disorganising their opponents. Posted on the high ground nearly twelve score yards away, their arrows often fell short of their aim. Of those that reached the Scots many fell harmless off their armed breasts, while not a few of them lighted on the undefended backs of their own comrades.

While the van was thus engaged, the remaining divisions of the English, combined into one long solid column of portentous strength and formidableness, crossed the Bannock and commenced the attack on the still unengaged portion of the Scottish line. First Randolph, then the divisions led by the young Steward and Douglas, found themselves in close grips with their assailants, and soon the battle raged from end to end of that solid and as yet unbroken line.

Bruce waited till the whole English troops were engaged, and then he sent Sir Robert Keith, Earl Marshal, with his five hundred horsemen, to attack the English archers, whose shafts were now beginning seriously to annoy the right wing of his army. By a dexterous flank movement Keith managed to reach his quarry before he was perceived. Falling upon them unawares he accomplished his mission with no great difficulty. They were completely dispersed and put to

flight, nor were they able to rally again during the remainder of the battle.

By this time Bruce was so far satisfied with the look of affairs that he began to bethink him whether he might not with safety exchange his defensive tactics for offensive. The day had not hitherto gone against him—that was clear—but he was still a long way from being able to count upon victory. Nevertheless, the balance of endurance was as yet on his side. The English were, if anything, losing heart. At each onset their assault was becoming more feeble. His men, on the contrary, were gaining confidence, and were fighting as well, perhaps better than ever they had done. Every one was exerting himself to the utmost. Even his little body of archers—an "awkward squad" no doubt at the best—were now making their shafts felt through the narrow openings between the three divisions of their countrymen.

Accordingly, "all blyth," as Barbour tells us, he now proposed to the Captains of his division—the reserve—that they should join the fray. The little speech which Barbour puts into his mouth shows the excitement under which he was evidently labouring for the moment.

"Look, my Lords," he said, pointing to the surging field, "how well our men are fighting. See how distressed our enemies are becoming. Let us go and help them. A little more pressure on these English loons, and, by the grace of God, the day will be our own."

This was undoubtedly the critical moment of the battle. A single false step and the freedom of Scotland might have been indefinitely postponed.

Happily for his country, Bruce managed to keep his head cool in the midst of an excitement which maddened every officer and soldier fighting under his banner.

Edward Bruce's division had hitherto borne the burden and heat of the day, and it was to their assistance that the King at first led his company. But he had no idea of aiding his brother exclusively. Wherever the line was weakest there was the King with his men, filling up gaps, encouraging, aiding, himself doing the work of ten. For by this time the fury of the battle was at its height. On either side "they focht as they were in a rage;" "they laid on as men out of wit."

All of a sudden, no doubt upon a signal given by the King, the whole Scotch line made a step forward. At first the movement was scarcely noticed by their opponents. But with the next step of the Scots the English began to retreat. Still, with a gallantry worthy of a better cause, they persisted in their attacks. But their force and frequency were perceptibly diminished.

Then along the whole Scottish line there ran the joyful cry, "On them, on them! they fail, they fail!"

The Scots redoubled their efforts. Now at length they were marching "redshod" on the path of victory. Every step taken they felt was trampling the pride of England under foot, beating back its chivalry, avenging the unnumbered wrongs of a hundred years.

At this crisis a cry of terror and dismay went up from the English ranks. For, looking up, they saw on the crest of the hill a fresh army approaching—an army whose numbers seemed almost equal to that with which they were then contending; an army marching against

them in hot haste, yet in unbroken order, with banners displayed, with weapons brandished above their heads, sounding their warhorns, and shouting at the pitch of their voices, "Slay! slay! spare not! upon them hardily."

From that moment all was panic, all was confusion. It shows the terrible demoralisation of the English troops that, though many must have perceived it, not a single one amongst its innumerable leaders was able to convince his soldiers of the utterly baseless character of their fears. For the host that they now saw advancing upon them was no army, but an unarmed crowd of "yeomen, swains, and poverals" (poor people)—the camp-followers, gillies, sutlers, and idlers in fact, whom, as we have already seen, Bruce ordered off the battle-field as cumberers of the ground. The standards they displayed were old sheets, fragments of tent covers, spare articles of clothing, and pieces of coloured linen tied on the young saplings that they had torn out of the ground. Their weapons were anything that they could lay hands on, or find on the field of battle. No doubt their number was great—fifteen thousand, we are told, at the least. But numbers count for nothing in the case of an unarmed and undisciplined mob. Like a flock of sheep before the shepherd's dog, a multitude is easily dispersed by a few resolute and cool-headed men with weapons in their hands. In all Edward's splendid and invincible army there was not to be found a commander who could command when the occasion for his services arose.

The position of the English was now critical in the extreme. For so closely were they packed in the little plot of ground, only half a mile or so square, which

formed the battlefield, that they had not room to retreat. What between the Scottish spearmen with their levelled pikes steadily pressing them backwards towards the Bannock, and the army of "gillies" closing in upon them from the flanks, and the Scottish cavalry laying about them with their broadswords and axes wherever they could find an opening, and the Scottish archers directing their deadly showers of lethal shafts wherever the English ranks were thickest, not a single avenue of escape seemed open to the devoted host. Nevertheless, whole squadrons betook themselves to flight. But flight with them was not safety. Many fell into the pits that Bruce had provided the Saturday before. Still more were drowned attempting to cross the Bannock Burn. When the battle was finally over, Barbour tells us a man could have passed the burn dryshod over the bodies of the men and horses that lay heaped up "betwix its braes."

The magnificent Edward saved himself by flight. It is said that at the crisis of the fight "he attempted to ride forward with or without his bodyguard, that he might dye his steel in the blood of the Scots." But the story lacks corroboration. "I have heard," says Barbour, "that Odomar de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, when he saw that the day was nearly lost, took the King's hand and led him against his will off the field." But whether it was voluntary or otherwise, that the King actually fled is beyond the reach of doubt. Sir Giles de Argentine accompanied him till he thought him beyond the reach of danger, then with a profound obeisance he left him to pursue his shameful journey alone, and returning to his comrades found a glorious grave on the field of battle. Gloucester, too, the Bruce's

kinsman, whom Edward that morning had taunted as a coward, perished like the brave soldier that he was; so did Lord Clifford, Lord Talbot, Lord Montfort, Sir John Comyn, Sir Edward Hastings, Sir Robert de Leisle, and many another good and gallant knight.

As for the prisoners taken, their number was very great. Amongst them was Robert Baston, the Carmelite friar, whom Edward had brought along with him as his *vates sacer*—the laureate of his expected victory. Bruce was in a merry mood, as he might well be, when the unfortunate churchman was brought before him. He gave him his liberty without ransom, on condition that he would do for him what he had been commissioned to do by his defeated rival. The poor friar accordingly wrote a Latin poem on the battle, and no doubt he tried to do his best. But that Edward had considerably overrated his poetical abilities may be seen by any one who will take the trouble to read the "piece," which is to be found in Bower's continuation of Fordun's *Scotichronicon*.

That morning when the sun rose Scotland was enslaved and poor; that evening when the sun set Scotland was free and rich—rich not only in the loot of the English camp, in the silken fabrics, jewelled armour, and costly weapons left on the field of battle, and in the ransom of her captives, but passing rich in the ever-glorious page that had that day been added to her annals.

THE BATTLE OF OTTERBURN.

G. W. Wilson Photo J. Skinner & Co.

TWIZEL CASTLE.

The Battle of Otterburn.

I.

The reign of Robert II., the first King of the house of Stuart, far from partaking of the troubles and commotions which usually attend the inauguration of a new dynasty, was for the kingdom a season of unusual quiet and repose. The long War of Independence was practically over. The nobles, after an abortive attempt to put forward William, Earl of Douglas—the nephew of the "Good Lord James," the Bruce's friend and counsellor—as a competitor for the crown, had acquiesced in the new settlement. Even their family feuds, the one great blot in Scottish history, though never entirely silent, were for the moment almost entirely forgotten amidst the general rejoicings which greeted the accession of a new and popular line of kings. The fires of Border warfare alone, the last monument of the hereditary antagonism between England and Scotland, continued to burn with unabated fury.

The pacific disposition of Robert II. was notorious; but despite his undoubted hold upon the affections of his subjects, his efforts were powerless to repress the warlike inclination of his proud and turbulent aristocracy. And thus with every succeeding year of his reign the hostilities on the Borders had been growing more

serious. They were destined to culminate in the year 1388, in the Battle of Otterburn.

The story of that famous fight—the one great battle of the reign of the first Stuart King—is popularly believed to be embalmed for all future ages in the glowing ballad of Chevy Chase.

Perhaps no poem in the English language has had a wider circle of admirers of every class and of every age. "I never heard," said Sir Philip Sydney—no bad judge either of poetry or war—"the old song of Percie and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet, and yet it is sung but by some blinde crowder, with no rougher voice than rude skill." "I had rather be the author of Chevy Chase," said Ben Jonson, "than of all my works." Almost within our own day, at the firesides of Northumberland during the long winter evenings, the moving recital of the exploits of the two rival leaders formed a never-sating source of amusement and delight. Yet the poem, despite its powerful appeal to English patriotism and English bravery, is not only unhistorical; it has absolutely no connection with the battle which it is supposed to describe. It is the account of a mere predatory raid, for which it is hard to find even a foundation in fact. The scene is laid in the time of James I., when both Percy and Douglas were dead and buried. Times, places, and persons are confounded in an inextricable mass of jumble and confusion.

Fortunately for us, however, the subject had as many attractions for the annalists as for the minstrels. It was like the taste of a forbidden pleasure to the monkish historians of the period, to turn from their jejune task of chronicling treaties and councils and the arid details

of the records of their respective monasteries, to describe the flash and glitter of knightly swords, and the ever-changing movements of an almost heroic conflict. And though we see the battle now only athwart the barred windows of the cloister cell, and through eyes dimmed by years of mortification and seclusion from the world, the yellow pages on which its story is written still teem with life, and are still aglow with the stroke and parry of human passion, and the surge and flow of chivalrous instincts.

Early in spring, at a great meeting held at Aberdeen, under the pretext of a solemn festival of the church, a fresh foray into England was determined upon by the Border lords. Summonses were issued for the gathering of the feudal host, and the neighbourhood of Jedburgh was assigned for the place of meeting. The castle of Jedburgh, it is true, was then in the hands of the English. But in the deep forests which encircled it, and in the wild mountain glens which radiated from it in all directions, a large force might muster, it was thought, without attracting attention. So secluded were the dark recesses of its woods, that not many years before, when all the country round was in possession of the English, a body of Scottish nobles with their followers, had, like Wallace in the Torwood, or like Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest, resided there in safety for several years.

On the appointed day, an army, such as had not been seen, it was said, for sixty years, assembled at the place of meeting. It consisted of twelve hundred lances and forty thousand rank and file.

The young Earl of Douglas was the first to arrive. After him came John, Earl of Moray, and his brother

George, Earl of Dunbar and March, the Earls of Fife, Sutherland, and Mar, Douglas, the grim Lord of Galloway, the two Lindsays—Sir William and Sir James—Sir John Swinton, Sir John Sandilands, Sir Patrick Dunbar, Sir Simon Glendinning, and many another Border knight and squire. Each baron led his own vassals. Each knight was attended by two or three squires. Each man-at-arms had his sergeant to hold his horse, to buckle his armour, and to perform the same duties towards him which the squires fulfilled towards the knights. Captains and men-at-arms were alike in the highest spirits, and they encouraged each other with the assurance that they would effect such an inroad as should be remembered by the English for twenty years to come. The more completely to mature their plans, a further meeting was arranged when they had reached the little church of Zedon, probably Southdown, on the Jed, a few miles nearer the English Border.

Though his sons, five sons-in-law, and a nephew were among the leaders of the host, the project had, as usual, been carefully concealed from the Scottish King. It had not, however, escaped the notice of the English. Henry Percy, surnamed Hotspur—then in his twenty-third year—the eldest son of the aged Earl of Northumberland, recently appointed by Richard a warden of the English marches, his father and his brother Ralph, and all the north country chivalry, were by means of spies, who, as heralds and minstrels, travelled with ease and safety throughout the length and breadth of the land, fully as cognisant of their movements as were the Scottish lords themselves. They knew all about the assembly at Aberdeen. They had heard of the muster at Jedburgh. They had observed the unwonted agitation

which prevailed throughout the whole country side, and they were in course of making their preparations very secretly to resist the threatened attack. Meantime, to gain still more complete information, they resolved to send a spy to the gathering at the foot of the Cheviots.

A certain squire, well acquainted with the country, was accordingly despatched from Newcastle for the purpose. He reached Zedon as the Scottish barons were in consultation in the church. The Englishman entered and heard their deliberations; but before the meeting broke up he thought it prudent to retire. Leaving the church unobserved, he went to look for his horse. It was gone. "A Scotsman," says Froissart, "(for they are all thieves) had stolen him." To have made enquiry would have been to risk detection. He therefore set out on foot, booted and spurred as he was. But he had scarcely gone about two bow-shots, when his appearance attracted the notice of two Scottish knights who were in conversation.

"That fellow," said the one, "has seemingly lost his horse, and yet he is making no attempt to seek for it."

"On my troth," replied the other, "I doubt much if he belongs to us. Let us follow and question him."

He was soon overtaken. They asked him whence he came, whither he was going, and what he had done with his horse. His answers were contradictory and confused, and he was accordingly taken before the council of war. There, under the threat of death, he was made to reveal the purpose for which he had come, and to supply his enemies with much the same sort of information which he had expected to obtain from them. The barons of Northumberland, he said, had determined not to meet the Scotch. But as soon as

they had crossed the Border, an English army would enter Scotland and mete out retaliatory devastation upon the lands of the Border lords. If the Scots marched upon Cumberland, the English would advance upon Edinburgh by Berwick. If they pressed on towards Newcastle, the English would proceed by way of Carlisle. This was valuable intelligence. The Scottish lords looked at each other, but were silent. The prisoner having been removed, a spirited debate ensued. It was evident their plans must be changed. A united attack upon England was impossible. The only way to defeat the arrangements of the English was to enter England by both the eastern and western marches. By such tactics, and by such alone, could this counter invasion of Scotland be prevented.

It was agreed to divide the host into two army corps. While the largest division with the baggage, under the command of Archibald Douglas, Lord of Galloway, marched upon Carlisle, the other, consisting of three hundred picked lances and two thousand infantry, led by the young Earl of Douglas, would invade Northumberland. When both had been united, a fitting time and place would be selected to give battle to the English. After taking an affectionate farewell of each other the two divisions started, the one marching to the right and the other to the left.

On Friday, the 7th August, the army of the Earl of Douglas crossed the border of Redeswire. Moving forward over Ottercop's Hill and down by Rothley Crag, it swept silently but swiftly through Northumberland, and forded the Tyne above Newburn. Journeying through by-roads, attacking neither town, castle, nor manor, it reached the rich bishopric of Durham without

encountering opposition. So suddenly and secretly had the march been conducted, that the first intelligence of its arrival which the north country barons received was the smoke of burning houses, and the crowds of fugitives hastening towards Newcastle. The Earl of Northumberland immediately despatched his two sons—Hotspur and his brother Ralph—to defend the city, while he himself remained at Alnwick to rouse the district. Meantime the Scots advanced through the fertile tract of country between Durham and Newcastle, levelling peel and fortalice, devastating village and grange, slaughtering and capturing the inhabitants, and driving or carrying away all the booty which they thought worth appropriating.

The flower of Northumberland had by this time collected within the walls of Newcastle. Barons, and knights, and squires—all the gentry of the district from York northwards—had rallied round Hotspur's standard; and the town was filled with more than it could lodge. On the 14th August the Scottish army encamped before Newcastle, and took up its position on that side of the town which looks towards Scotland. It was the Earl's intention to have attacked the place. But so strong were its defences, that without the assistance of Archibald Douglas' division he saw but little prospect of success. For three days he lay waiting for reinforcements. During that time there were almost constant skirmishes between the besiegers and the besieged.

Outside the moat which surrounded the town, the English had erected a species of wooden fortification after a fashion which was then common on the Continent, and which their recent wars with France had

probably taught them. It consisted of upright grated palisades, with openings about half a foot wide, and so low that a horse might without much difficulty leap over them. At these barriers the young knights on both sides fought daily. Many valiant deeds were done with lances hand to hand. The two gallant sons of the Earl of Northumberland were always the first to arrive, and generally the last to leave.

In one of these many encounters, the Earl of Douglas, after a long conflict with Harry Percy, won his spear with its silken pennon attached, adding insult to the injury by the assurance that he would carry it with him into Scotland.

"Nay, Earl of Douglas!" retorted Hotspur, "that shall you never do."

"You must come this night and seek it then," replied the Earl.

But the night passed, and no effort was made to redeem the banner.

When the morning broke, its pearl-embroidered folds, emblazoned with the white lion of the Percys, was still floating above the pavilion of the Earl of Douglas.

Long before the sun was up the Scots were on their way home. About four, they reached the castle of Pontelands, which they took and burned. Then, turning off in a north-westerly direction, they made through Redesdale to Otterburn, and encamped on a little height, the site of an ancient Roman camp, above Greenchesters. On the north, their position was somewhat exposed, but on the south and west it was protected by natural woods, some remains of which, in the shape of a few straggling birch and rowan trees, are still to be seen at no great distance from the spot.

II.

It was now the height of summer, and all over the rich upland pastures the husbandmen were gathering in their hay. The heat, too, was very great, and the Scots, fatigued by their exertions, were not unwilling to rest for the remainder of the day. They had work, too, before them on the morrow. Not far from where they were encamped, in the midst of a piece of marshy ground, stood the Tower of Otterburn ; and this they were determined to raze. By all the unwritten laws of chivalry the challenge to the Percy would have been incomplete had a single ground of provocation been left untried.

On the following day, Wednesday, the 19th August 1388, the light had scarcely dawned when their trumpet sounded for the attack. But the peel withstood all their efforts. In the afternoon, weary and worn out, and, to say the truth, not a little dispirited at their non-success, the troops returned to their quarters. A council of war was hurriedly called to consider their further movements. Many were of opinion that the attack should be abandoned, and that the army, leaving its present position, should turn off to join the other division of the Scottish forces. But Douglas took a different view. It was cowardly, he thought, to decamp without accomplishing the enterprise they had undertaken. Besides, he was still in hopes that Hotspur would make an endeavour to recover his pennon before the Scots finally left the country. His views prevailed. The troops proceeded to fortify their position. They entrenched themselves behind a double earthwork towards the north. They laid down felled trees wherever

their rampart was weak. The baggage and servants, with their booty of sheep and cattle, they placed on the side of the camp at the entrance of the marsh on both sides of the road to Newcastle.

The twilight came. The sun went down over the Cheviots. Many of the men, exhausted with the labours of the day, retired to rest. The lords were supping in their tents. They had laid aside their armour on account of the closeness of the weather, and were clad in their "side-gowns" only. All of a sudden a watchman on an untrapped horse was seen spurring towards the camp. "The enemy is upon us," he cried.

His abrupt call to arms threw the whole encampment into confusion. The knights flew to their armour. The Earl of Douglas hurried to marshal his men. In the disorder which everywhere prevailed cuissarts and greaves and brasiers were forgotten. The Earl of Moray had not time to don his helmet. The Earl of Douglas had no leisure to give his own arming a thought. Above the din and bustle, the clang of armourers closing rivets up, the bugle calls summoning the troops to their respective standards, the neighing of horses and the tramp of hurrying feet, cries of "A Percy! A Percy!" were now distinctly heard; and soon on the crest of a hill, disposed in two divisions, with banners flying, and the dying sunset glinting on the bright armour of the knights, the forces of Hotspur might be seen pricking forward to meet their foes.

The Percy had at last come to retrieve his pennon.

Impatient to wipe out the insult to his chivalry, without waiting for the Bishop of Durham, who, eager to avenge the devastation of his bishopric, had collected his vassals and was hastening to his assistance, he had

left Newcastle in the forenoon after dinner, and with six hundred spears of knights and squires, and upwards of eight thousand infantry, had travelled the eight short leagues which separated him from the Scots. With this force, which stood in the proportion of three to one to his enemies, victory, he thought, was certain.

It had been arranged that the first "battle," consisting of the greater part of the troops under the command of Hotspur himself and his brother Ralph, should meet the Earl of Douglas if he was disposed to fight. While they were thus engaged, the other, under Sir Matthew Redman and Sir Robert Ogle, would attack the tents and destroy and slay all they found. Percy accordingly pressed on towards the camp; but mistaking the huts of the servants, which were partially concealed by trees, for the pavilions of the lords, his first attack was directed against the cooking galleys and camp kitchens. For a time those who were in charge were able to withstand the onset of the English, but, overpowered, at length they were forced to flee. Seeing this, Sir Matthew Redman with his followers immediately started in pursuit, whilst Hotspur, rejoicing in the sight, congratulated himself on having obtained an almost bloodless victory.

Meanwhile the Scottish leaders, observing his error, hastily ordered a body of infantry to join the servants and keep up the skirmish. They themselves having completed their arming and separated their men into three divisions, under the respective pennons of the Earl of Douglas and the two gallant brothers the Earls of March and Moray, his kinsmen, left the camp in silence, and crossing round its rear, marched along a mountain ridge covered with holt and scrub, till they had reached the higher ground. Then falling upon the

English flank, with wild shouts and banners displayed they charged into the midst of their enemies. Their opponents, taken aback, speedily turned and faced their foes.

The battle now raged. Cries of "A Percy!" "A Douglas!" "St. George!" "St. Andrew!" and many another warlike slogan, resounded over the field. Lances were shattered, saddles emptied, battle-axes broken. Under the bright light of the moon, the shimmer of flashing swords gleamed on every side. So close was the impact of the contending forces, that the English archers had not room to draw their bows. As the Scots, discomfited on the first onset, were in the act of retiring, Douglas, burning to win renown, ordered his banner to advance. Hotspur and his brother Sir Ralph immediately hastened forward to oppose him. The banners met, and a deadly struggle ensued between the knights and squires on either side. "There was no *ho*—no "desisting"—between them," says Froissart, "as long as spears, swords, axes, or daggers endured." "Cowards there had no place, but hardiness reigned with goodly feats of arms." The banner of Douglas, with its crowned heart surmounted by the three stars, was at one time in imminent danger, and would have been captured but for the valiant defence of Sir Patrick Hepburn and his son.

At length the Scots, unable to resist the superior number of the English, began to give way. At this juncture the Earl of Douglas, seizing a double-handed battle-axe, and closely followed by his warlike chaplain, Richard Lundie, afterwards Archdeacon of Aberdeen, and a devoted handful of his personal friends, dashed like another Hector into the midst of his enemies, dealing such blows around that all rushed from

him on every side. Few in the darkness recognised in the central figure of that little band, round which the tide of battle now eddied with renewed and ever-rising vehemence, the gallant leader of the Scottish forces. At last he fell, pierced by three spears which had been pointed at him at once. He was thrown to the ground, fighting desperately. No sooner was he down than his head was cleft with a battle-axe. A fourth spear was thrust through his thigh. Then the main body of the English, pressing over his prostrate form, carried the surging wave of combat to another part of the field.

When all were gone he strove to raise himself, but fell back powerless. He was alone and unattended, save by his lion-hearted chaplain, now wounded himself, who, battle-axe in hand, had never left him the whole night through. By his side, covered with fifteen wounds from lances and other weapons, lay the dead body of his squire, Robert Hart. He, too, had fought by his master so long as the power to fight remained. As he lay there in mortal agony, there came up to him his cousins, Sir John Lindsay and Sir John and Sir Walter Sinclair, and one or two others of his knights and squires.

"Cousin," said Sir John Sinclair, kneeling by the side of the dying man, "how fares it with you?"

"But indifferently," he replied. "I have little hope of living. My heart becomes every moment more faint. But, thanks to God! I die, like most of my ancestors, on the field of battle. Raise up my banner," he continued, "it is lying on the ground, and shout 'Douglas!' as if I were with you. They say a dead Douglas will win a field. To-night it shall be accomplished. Farewell!"

He was dead.

Throwing a cloak over the body, Sir John Sinclair

lifted his standard; and once more the cry of "A Douglas! A Douglas!" rallied the disheartened Scots. The knights came spurring together from every part of the field. The Earls of Moray and March, with their banners and men, trooped round the uplifted pennon. There was one desperate and collective charge, one crash of splintered lances, and then slowly and sullenly the English commenced to retreat. The dead man had gained the day. Hotspur himself was captured, and, like his brother Sir Ralph, had to yield himself prisoner to a Scottish knight. The pursuit lasted for the remainder of the night, and was continued for a distance of five English miles. When at length the Scots returned to their camp, the numbers of the captured exceeded that of the captors. It was reckoned that the English loss amounted to fifteen hundred men; while the Scots computed theirs at only a hundred slain and two hundred taken prisoners.

"Never since the battle of Bannockburn," says Froissart, "did the Scots gain a more complete or gainful victory." "It was told me," he continues, "and I believe it, that they gained two hundred thousand francs for their ransoms." Nor can he, although no friend to their race, abstain from adding a word of commendation to the Scots on their treatment of their prisoners. "When the Scots," he says, "saw the English were discomfited and surrendering on all sides, they behaved courteously to them, saying, 'Sit down and disarm yourselves, for I am your master,' but never insulted them more than if they had been brothers." Many of the prisoners were ransomed before they left the field. "Eche of them is so contente with other, that at their departynge curtoysly they will saye, God thanke ye."

III.

BEFORE the dawn of day the field was clear of combatants. But with the morning came another danger, which it called forth all the manhood and ingenuity of the Scots to meet.

The sun had hardly risen when the Scottish scouts posted along the road to Newcastle announced the approach of another English host. It was Walter Skirlaw, Bishop of Durham, eager to avenge the defeat of the Percy the night before. Wearied, wounded, and worn out, and cumbered with a multitude of prisoners, resistance seemed out of the question. But what exhausted nature refused to do, stratagem, it was thought, might accomplish.

The Bishop had advanced within a league of the camp, when a noise, which seemed "as if all the devils in hell had come thither to join it," startled his horses and disconcerted his men. The Bishop approached half a league nearer. Again the gruesome cacophony arose, more jarring and discordant than before. Once more the intrepid churchman urged forward his troops, and this time he was permitted to come within sight of the camp. A third time the sounds broke forth louder, more dissonant, more terrific than ever. The Bishop halted and took counsel with his knights. Concealed behind their intrenchments, the Scots could now distinctly see every movement of their enemy. It was plain the Bishop was irresolute. Perhaps a fourth blast from their cow-horns would assist him to make up his mind. Wilder, deeper, shriller, lustier, more demoniac than they had yet heard them, the horrid

strains echoed and bellowed, changed and swelled, boomed and shrieked, thundered and reverberated in their ears. At last, after long deliberation as it seemed, the English were seen to face about. One parting roar from the cow-horns, and the whole force was in retreat. With an infinite sense of relief, the Scots retired within their huts and tents to refresh themselves with meat and drink, and to enjoy the rest of which they stood so much in need.

Later in the day, with the dead bodies of the Earl of Douglas, Robert Hart, and Sir Simon Glendinning, enclosed in coffins and placed on carts, they withdrew from that position to the strength of which, rather than to their infernal minstrelsy, they probably owed their late deliverance. On the following day they arrived at Melrose, and there, in the Abbey of Black Monks, in a tomb of stone, with his banner floating above it, they laid the body of their brave commander. Soon after they dispersed to their various homes.

With the almost immediately supervening return of the Lord of Galloway and his division of the army, the great Scottish foray of 1388 came to an end.

THE MURDER IN THE MONASTERY.

G. W. Wilson, Photo. J. Skinner & Co.

THE TAY AND NORTH INCH FROM PERTH BRIDGE.

The Murder in the Monastery

I.

One bleak grey morning in December 1436, the douce burghers who dwelt in the low, straw-thatched cottages which then formed the only street of Scotland's capital, were awakened out of their laggard slumbers by the clatter of horses' hoofs on the rough cobble-stones of the causeway.

It was one of the dreariest mornings of what eventually turned out to be the coldest winter that the oldest inhabitant alive in those times could remember —a winter so hard that, during one of its frosts, wine and ale were sold by the pound weight, and liquids of all descriptions had to be melted before the fire ere they could be used.

It was not snowing, but the wind blew coldly from the north, the grey clouds came tumbling up from the sea, and flocks of ominous seabirds, flying inland, presaged storm and trouble for the now slowly approaching day.

Yet none of these threatening portents appeared to damp the spirits of the party as it gaily trotted down the steep slope that leads from the portcullis gate of Edinburgh Castle. Horses snorted, bridle-chains jingled, hoofs struck merrily against the stones, and

ever and anon there came a burst of laughter from one or other of the riders, assuring the citizens, peering through half-opened doors and only half-unlatched shutters, that no evil was intended to them or any one else by the cloaked and muffled band, whose early start and somewhat mysterious appearance might otherwise have caused them a certain amonnt of not unnatural apprehension.

But, indeed, they had no cause to fear; for, though the dim morning light prevented their recognising him, the leader of the party was no less a personage than the King of Scotland himself, and the purpose of his journey was only to rejoin the Queen at the Blackfriars' Monastery of St. Johnston—or, as the town is now called, Perth—where she awaited his arrival, and where it had been determined that the Court should spend its Christmas.

And if ever monarch in history deserved the title of the People's Friend, it was the first James of the House of Stuart.

It was no easy thing—indeed, it was always a dangerous matter—to maintain the claims of the people against what were considered in those days the rights —we should call them by a very different name now— of the proud, cruel, tyrannical, selfish, feudal nobility. The man who did so, even though he were a king, carried his life in his hands. But James, the bravest, most just, and most manly in all his dominions and of all his line, had not only dared to do so, but so far as he had yet gone he had been successful. It was not cruelty, as his enemies called it, but a stern sense of justice that prompted the terrible punishments which on more than one occasion he had meted out to noble

offenders, who had hitherto thought themselves superior to the law.

The proud Highland chieftain who had first taken a poor woman's cows and then sent her with horse shoes nailed on her bare feet to make her complaint to the King, was unpleasantly surprised, no doubt, when he learned that instead of the King treating it as the good joke he himself considered it, he was to be dragged through the streets at a horse's tail, clad in an ignominious dress, and then hanged upon a gallows.

So, too, was that Lowland baron, who so far forgot himself as to strike another on the face in the King's presence, when the King drawing his own dagger from his girdle, presented it to the man who had been assaulted, and ordered him on his allegiance then and there to strike off the offending noble's hand.

But the lesson which these examples were intended to teach was soon learned and never forgotten. In the twelve short years of his actual reign he had fully vindicated the boast he had made on his return from his long captivity in England, that he would make the key keep the castle and the furze-bush the cow, though he were to lead the life of a dog to effect it.

And now the King's writ ran from one end of the kingdom to the other. Men's lives were safe, men's property was secure. There was one law alike for "velvet cap and clouted shoon," and Parliament, instead of having all its time taken up with concocting measures to increase the power and add to the aggrandisement of the nobles, busied itself in making laws, prompted and conceived for the most part by the monarch himself, for improving the material and intellectual condition of the people — laws which

assumed that they were men and not serfs, laws which taught them that they had a stake in the country as well as the nobility had; laws which encouraged them to improve their means and better their social position, and promised them that, in their efforts to do so, they would receive the protection of the King, the King's officers, and the King's laws.

The very homeliness of some of these enactments helped to convince the people that the King was in earnest in his desire to promote their well-being. A law which directed men to slaughter the wolf-whelps that devoured honest men's sheep, and whose chase had been so long the diversion of the nobles, was clear proof of this. So was that other one which decreed the destruction of the rooks that "bigg" in kirkyards and orchards, and that "dois great skaith upon cornis;" or that which encouraged every proprietor, tenant, and farmer—every one in possession of even the smallest bit of land—to plant trees according to his ability; or that which ordained all sorts of terrible things for sornars, beggars, rogues, and vagabonds; or that which, to make the people fit to defend their own little homesteads against the English long-bowmen, ordered every man and boy above the age of twelve years to "busk him to the archery;" or those which, to discourage foolish extravagance, regulated the purfled sleeves and lawn curches of the women, and the furred gowns, silken garments, and defensive armour of the men.

James was every inch a King; and if he did endeavour to ingratiate himself with his people, he did so in right royal fashion. He did not try, as smaller-minded men might have done, to buy the people's love with gifts, or largesse, or concessions; he

claimed it by his actions and his conduct. And the people willingly acknowledged the claim.

They loved their King for his virtues, and they admired him also for his accomplishments. As a poet, and one of the best his country has produced; as a musician who could play no less than eight instruments, including "the organ, the tabor, and the shepherd's reed;" as an artist who painted beautifully in miniature; as architect, builder, and gardener, they possibly set little store by his attainments. But they could and they did appreciate a King who excelled all his court in every manly excercise; who was the best rider, the best archer, the best pikesman, the best leaper, runner, and dancer, and the most perfect knight in all his dominions; and who, far from being proud or vainglorious, was as affable with a hind as with a lord, and as much at home with the Kitties and Gillies, and Hutcheons, and Towsies, and all the rest of the rustic frieze-clad merrymakers of "Christis Kirk of the Green," as with Falkland-bred courtiers and dignified churchmen and grave statesmen in robes of silk and velvet and cloth of gold.

But while we have been thus discussing his character, the King has been steadily pursuing his journey.

It took him but a short time to trot through the town, for its whole length in those days could not have exceeded a quarter of a mile at the most. And soon he is cantering through open fields and by clumps of scrubby brushwood, reaching in due time the little hamlet of Holyrood, nestling beneath the walls of the stately old Abbey founded by David I., with the same confiding sense of security that its sister burgh of Edinburgh felt from its proximity to the strong walls

and impregnable position of the still more ancient Castle of the Maidens.

The Abbey past, with its gardens and its orchards, the King's route is now due north. On his right are the frowning buttresses of Samson's Ribs and Salisbury Crags, with the little Chapel of St. Anthony at their foot, standing out solitary and alone on its pinnacle of rock, like some early Christian anchorite lifting up his hands in silent morning prayer in the midst of the wilderness.

And now the last outlying spurs of Arthur's Seat have been left behind, and the King, pulling his black velvet cap lower over his eyes, and tightening the belt of his travelling cloak, has struck his silver spurs into his horse's flanks, and with the wind blowing sheer in his face, is dashing onwards at full speed towards the sea.

It is now clear daylight. But the morning shows no signs of improving. The sky seems covered with a leaden pall. The opposite coasts of Fife are not visible owing to the mist, and the "white horses" are mantling the gurly waters of the Firth.

"We're like to have a rough passage across the Ferry, my Lords," said the King, pointing with his riding whip seaward. "Did ever ye see sic a joyless morning."

"It's a bad omen, my Lord King," said the courtier who rode next him, a young dissipated looking noble whom the King as well as his companions addressed familiarly as the King of Love.

"What's that ye say, Sandy?" said the King laughing, "a bad omen! Leave ye omens and a' sic-like fantasies to bairns and auld wives. Freits aye wait on them that look for them. Is it not so, my Lords?"

"I wish the weather had been the only one," said

another of the party, a grave middle-aged man in the sober attire of a churchman, in a low voice to his neighbour. "There's ower mony portentous things fleein' about in the air just now, if a' tales be true, to bring this journey of the King's to ony but a mischancy end."

"Whisht man, whisht!" said the knight to whom this remark was addressed, "whisht, or the King may hear ye."

"It might be better that he should," replied the other. "But I fear it would do but little good. It's hard to mak' the King change his mind when once he's ta'en a thing into his head. As for this daft journey o' his, an' he had listened to my advice it's never a step that he would have taen towards St. Johnston. But there's nae help for it noo," he added, sighing deeply. "Just hark ye to the way he's laughin' and daffin' wi' these gay young lords in front there. My belief is," he added in a whisper, bending over towards the knight, "my belief is that the King is fey."

"Fey or no fey," replied the other, reining in his horse, "remains to be seen. But let's fall behind a pace or two, my Lord Prior; ye spoke of portents?"

The churchman gave a nod of intelligence.

"Ye have not heard then?" he asked, when they had taken up their position in the rear.

"Nae, Lord Prior. Rumour, the jaud, caresna' to whisper into sic auld lugs as mine."

"'Twas the very day the King announced this journey."

"Gang on, man, gang on!" said the old man impatiently, bringing his horse's head close to that of the other.

"That nicht a fiery swerd was seen hanging ower the Castle of Edinburgh, and"—dropping his voice—"they tell me it was seen at St. Johnston too."

His companion shook his head.

"Aye, that's bad indeed," he remarked.

"Yet it's no the worst. The other day a calf was seen wi' a horse's heid, and a soo at the Borough Muir dropped a litter o' dogs. But," stopping suddenly short, "a' the saints preserve us! What has happened noo?"

"The King's thrown," said Sir Archibald, rising up in his stirrups.

"Nae," answered the other, "it's only his horse that has shied. I see his black bonnet with the red feathers in it aboon the heads o' them a'. And see, he's aff again, fleeter nor the wind, with a' his Court behind him. There! there!" he continued, pointing towards the spot where the incident, whatever it was, had occurred, "see, Sir Knight, that's it that made the King's horse shy, and near lost us the best King that ever reigned in Scotland."

It was the figure of a woman, standing in the midst of the highway, a woman whose looks and appearance were sufficiently singular to account for the horse's nervousness. She was very old. Her face, which might once have been handsome, was so seamed with wrinkles, so furrowed with eld and care, and so begrimed with smoke and dirt, that it looked more like that of a mummy than of a human being. Long grey elf locks streamed down over her wasted cheeks. Her clothes were in rags. In her right hand she held a tall stick or pole, apparently a young fir tree torn forcibly up by the roots; the other was pressed

against her brow to shade her eyes, which were steadfastly fixed on the King's now fast-retreating figure.

She was muttering to herself in Gaelic when the Prior and Sir Archibald came up to her.

She took no notice of them when they first accosted her; but at last, when she could see the King no longer, she turned round to see by whom she was addressed.

"It's ower later," she said, speaking this time in Scotch. "I canna save him. My feet are sore, my Lords, wi' long travel," she continued, holding out her ragged brogues as if to confirm her words. "I've comed a long way to speak the words I was bidden to speak, but it's ower late. He will na listen."

At this moment a horseman, evidently one of the Royal party, was seen returning along the road the King had traversed. It was the young knight whom the King called the Lord of Love.

"The King's at the pier of Leith already, my Lord Prior and Sir Knight," he called out as soon as he came within speaking distance, "where he awaits your attendance. Ride ye on. I'll follow; but first I have a word or two to say to this old Irish wife."

Taking that as a hint that their presence was not desired at the interview, they cantered off at once. But they had not gone many yards when they were rejoined by the Lord of Love. They soon learned from him, in reply to their eager inquiries, full particulars of the incident which had caused them so much perplexity and alarm. The King was cantering quietly along, chatting gaily with the Lord of Love as was his wont, when suddenly this old Erse or Highland woman started up from off the stone by the roadside on which

she was sitting, evidently on the outlook for the party, and rushed forward to seize the King's bridle. Naturally the horse shied, and the King was all but thrown. Several of the party rode forward to assist him, but before they could do so the King had recovered his seat, and, lashing his horse, had ridden away from the rest of the company. Without thinking of the old woman, his Court immediately followed. But some of those who came up last had distinctly heard her call out to the King as he rode off, that if he passed yon water that day—pointing to the Firth, which stretched out before them, looking black and sullen enough to justify her warning—he would never return alive.

The King had not heard the words himself, but when this was reported to him, he became suddenly downcast and gloomy. And a moment or two later he had told his "familiar," the King of Love, the reason why.

A day or two previously, he said, he had read in a book that "this self-same year a King of Scottis suld be slayne." He had thought nothing of the prophecy at the time, nor did he even then. But, coupled with the old woman's warning, what if there should be something in it after all?

"At any rate," he said, "ride back, Sandy, and see if you can fin' oot frae the auld custock what she means. No' that I believe there's onything in it," added the King with emphasis; "no!—not ae word."

And the Lord of Love had done as he was bid. The old woman—"she clepit herself a dyvenouresse," says an old chronicle—had indeed admitted making use of the words. But she would give no reason for her statement. One "Huthart" had told her so, was all

she said. Who this Huthart was—whether he was man, or spirit, or devil—she could not, at any rate she would not say.

The trio approached the King, and the young knight reported the result of his interview.

James laughed when he had finished his tale. But those standing by him were impressed with the hollowness of his mirth. However, the journey proceeded without any further accident or incident beyond a desperate tossing in crossing the "water" to Fife, and in due time they reached their destination.

But though the King often afterwards referred to the occurrence, making it indeed a fruitful occasion for chaff and banter, it was plain to all who shared his intimacy that it had made a deeper impression upon him than he cared to show.

And unhappily the King had good grounds for apprehension. For enemies he undoubtedly had—enemies who had sworn to take vengeance upon him—enemies, too, who were not likely to belie their words.

But this demands a chapter for itself.

II.

When, after his long captivity in England, James, in 1424, returned to his native land, bringing with him as his Queen the fair English girl whom he had seen for the first time eight years before through the barred windows of his prison chamber in Windsor Castle, the joy of his people knew no bounds. Few of them had ever seen him; "howbeit, they war weil informit of his singular virtew mony yeris afore," and "he was ressavit with all the lordis of Scotland, spirituall and temporall, with maist honour."

But as his popularity with the people increased, so did his popularity with the nobles—the temporal ones at least, for James always managed to keep good friends with the Church—decrease.

And for this there were several reasons.

The titled nobility of Scotland in those days were few in number, hardly amounting, indeed, to more than twenty all told. But besides these there was a large class of lesser barons—the landed gentry, as we should call them nowadays—who were intensely aristocratic in their feelings, and who never failed to side with the nobility when the rights, or monopolies, or privileges of the former were thought to be in danger.

Of these two classes, a considerable number were adherents of the Dukes of Albany—Robert and Murdoch—who had been Regents of Scotland during the King's captivity in England. When James came to his own he had made short work with the Albany party. He had dealt out to them something which many people thought was very like Jeddart justice.

Speaking metaphorically, he had hanged them first and condemned them afterwards—not without good reason, we may well believe, for the Albanys were shrewdly suspected of having their own designs upon the throne. But the executions, the forfeitures, the imprisonments which ensued, and which James had thought necessary, not only for his own protection but as a warning to all whom it might concern that a King was now on the throne who would stand no nonsense, were naturally very distasteful to the proud feudal lords who looked upon a king as merely one of themselves; and they accordingly provoked much unfavourable comment.

All sorts of imputations were cast upon the King. He was cruel, he was tyrannical, he was avaricious. His actions, when they were not prompted by a lust for blood—a lust which did not even spare his own nearest relations—were the outcome of covetousness and cupidity. His palm itched for the broad lands of his nobles. Their great revenues were absolutely necessary to him to satisfy his love of luxury and splendour. His residence in England had turned his head. Nothing would serve him now but English wealth and English magnificence; and much more wild talk of this nature. Every one who directly or indirectly had been affected by the King's action conceived he had a personal grievance against him; and the Albany party, who, though they knew their authority could never be restored, still cherished the hope of revenge, naturally did all in their power to fan the smouldering fires of discontent thus lighted.

Accident rather than design ultimately gave them the opportunity for vengeance they desired.

Among those who had been imprisoned for their adhesion to the Albany party was a certain Sir Robert Graham, brother of Sir Patrick Graham of Kincardine, one of those bold, cruel, headstrong, clever, eloquent, ready-witted, unscrupulous men dear to romance, whose fervid natures place them in the van of every conspiracy, but who, by a strange contradiction in human nature, are seldom found fighting for their own hand, and who rarely or never succeed in gaining any personal advantage by their enterprises. For what overt act Sir Robert had been imprisoned we cannot tell. But apparently his imprisonment had not lasted long, and it is more than probable that he was afterwards reconciled to the Government. At any rate he does not seem to have had any personal cause for hostility to the King.

But if Graham could not lay claim to any good-going grievance of his own, some of his nearest relatives could. And this, after all, was very much the same thing.

He was the uncle of Malise, Earl of Strathearn, a youth who, for political reasons, had recently been deprived of his earldom on technical grounds by the King, who had thereupon granted it to Walter Stuart, Earl of Athole, his own uncle. James, never wittingly unjust, had given him the earldom of Menteith in its place. But Malise was not satisfied. Athole was a very old man, and Malise, or rather his tutor, Sir Robert, saw, or thought he saw, in this grant of the Strathearn lands and honours, a mere piece of selfish manipulation on the part of the King to obtain their possession for himself when Athole died—an event that in the course of nature could not be far off. Athole, too, for some reason or other utterly incomprehensible, does not seem to have been pleased either.

At any rate this transaction appears to have created on the part of all concerned with it an animus against the King—an animus which was certainly not diminished by the fact that Athole had belonged to the Albany faction, and that he had some idea that the Crown should have rested on his head, and not on that of his nephew.

Out of these rather scanty materials the mischievous genius of Graham determined to attempt to create a political agitation.

In January 1435, shortly before Parliament assembled, at a meeting at which many of the nobles and landowners of Scotland were present, Graham took the opportunity of addressing them on what he represented as their grievances. The King's flagrant avarice, his unjust confiscation of estates, extra taxation, the general tyrannical conduct of the Government—such were the themes on which he enlarged. And none knew better than he how to play on the feelings of such an audience. The slumbering spirit of the barons began to stir. Their blood warmed; they became noisy and enthusiastic. Finally, they lost their heads altogether. They deputed Graham to represent their grievances to the King.

"And you will stand by me?" he asked.

"Certainly," was the unanimous reply.

"Even, if to save the authority of the laws and to vindicate the rights of our order, it may be necessary to place some temporary restraint upon the person of the King?"

"Undoubtedly," they answered in chorus.

Accordingly, when Parliament met, Graham proceeded to put this resolution into practice.

In a speech of great violence, great eloquence, and

great learning, he indicted James before the bar of public opinion. Then rising and approaching the royal seat, he laid his hand on the King's shoulder,

"I arrest you," he exclaimed in a loud voice, "in the name of the three estates of the realm, here in Parliament assembled. Is it not so, my Lords?" he added, turning confidently round to the benches on which the nobles sat.

Not a voice was raised in assent; not a sword leaped from its scabbard. In the midst of the oppressive silence that ensued the voice of the King was heard ordering his immediate arrest.

"Aye," cried Graham, as he was being led away to prison, with a contemptuous glance at the men who had deceived him, "thus, as the proverb says, was it ever — He that serveth a common man, serveth him but for short time!"

Instead of meting out to Graham the punishment that his treason—for his act *was* treason—so righteously deserved, the King contented himself by confiscating Sir Robert's estates, and banishing him from Court.

It was a mistaken clemency.

From the mountain recesses of the Highlands, "the country of the wild Scots," to which he betook himself, the audacious traitor sent a letter to the King renouncing his allegiance, and warning the King that if ever he could find the opportunity he would slay him. It was a wild threat, a threat so palpably, so improbably wild that the King may be excused if he gave himself little concern about it.

Yet, though neither he nor any one else—except the man who made it—believed in it, it was destined to be carried into sad and literal effect a year and a half later.

III.

THE Blackfriars' Monastery of St. Johnston was an old edifice, even in the days of James I. It had been founded in 1231 by Alexander II., and for many generations had been one of the favourite rural resorts of the Scottish kings. Nor can we wonder at it. Nature and art combined had lavished all their beauties upon it. "For solitude and eke for pleasaunce and delyght" no residence in Scotland had greater attractions, for its hospitality, its splendour, and liberality were proverbial.

It stood on the west side of the Tay, close to the street now known as Curfew Row. On the opposite side of the river rose the heather-clad slopes of Kinnoull Hill. Extensive gardens surrounded it, and the little touch of sentiment which even the brightest landscape requires to make its charms irresistible, was supplied by a well-cared-for burial-ground, where, in hallowed mould and in restful quiet, reposed many generations of holy men, "servants of the servants of the Lord."

Not a vestige of it now remains. It is gone with almost every other trace of the Fair City's old historic past. On that terrible 11th May 1559, when the town was delivered over to the tender mercies of John Knox and his iconoclastic crew, it was demolished in company with its sister houses of the Greyfriars and the Charterhouse monks. Little plunder, however, was obtained from its sack, though the grim old Reformer says that its plenishing was "more than became men professing poverty."

The tragedy with which its name is indelibly associated has destroyed its prestige; and with its prestige

had its prosperity departed. Looking at it even from the Reformers' point of view, one would have thought that for all the harm it was then doing, or was in the future likely to do, it might well have been spared, if only to commemorate a calamity which affected the national mind and elicited the national sorrow as no other event in Scottish history, with the single exception of Flodden, ever did, either before or after.

Life within the old monastery walls, if it was not very exciting, was at any rate simple, cheerful, and unaffected. The monastery buildings themselves were not large enough to do more than accommodate the King, the Queen, and a few of their immediate attendants. The servants slept in the outhouses within the curtilage. But the courtiers had to be lodged within the adjoining burgh; and its gates—for, unlike most Scottish towns of the day, Perth was a walled city—were carefully closed at night. But the whole of the day, and till ten or eleven o'clock at night, was spent by them in the company of the King.

The King was an early riser, and being extremely fond of all manly exercises, his morning hours were generally devoted to the *jeu de paume*, or tennis, a game at which he was a proficient. Dinner was served about eleven or twelve o'clock, and from that time till supper at four, there was either more tennis, or, if the weather was bad, the King amused himself with reading or music. The long evenings were passed in playing at chess or draughts—or, as the latter game was then called, the tables—in reading romances, in singing, piping, or harping. Then the King called for the *voidée*, or parting cup, and after he had drunk to his guests, the company departed for the night.

These long winter nights were neither so dull nor tedious as one might suppose. On the contrary, they seem to have been very pleasant and very mirthful gatherings. The King was the life of the party. He sang songs of his own composition, accompanying himself on one or other of the many instruments which he knew so well how to handle; he bantered his knights, "played" with the ladies, laughed, chatted, and behaved as if he had not an enemy or care in the world. None knew better than he how to teach the people to keep their place; but he was never offended with plain speaking, and he encouraged familiarity if it were only respectful.

Nor did he reprove it even when it touched on topics which, in a mixed company and in the presence of ladies, were decidedly risky. On one occasion, for example, we are told, that a squire, "that was right acceptable to the Kyng," began to tell him of a dream he had had the night before. He had dreamed, he said, that "Sir Robert Graeme shuld hafe slayne him." The Earl of Orkney, who was present, bade the indiscreet youth to hold his peace, and tell no such tales in the King's presence.

But the King, taking up the tale, remarked upon the squire's dream as a curious coincidence, "For I, too," he said, "had a terrible dream last night. It seemed to me that a cruel serpent and a horrible toad had assailed me in my chamber;" and then he went on to describe how "sore affrighted and afeard" he had been of them, the more so that he had nothing to succour or defend himself withal, but only the pair of tongs that stood beside the open fireplace.

But such serious themes were far from congenial to

the King's habitual temper. Disquieting thoughts, no doubt, would at times cross his mind—unwelcome and unbidden guests—thoughts of the old spaewife and her warning, thoughts of the prophecy in the old book, thoughts of his foes, perchance, in the country of the wild Scots. But he never referred to them, or if he did, it was only to point a jest or to feather a witticism.

Thus one night, as he was playing chess with his "familiar," the Lord of Love—

"You know, Sir Alexander," he said, resting his hand on the piece he was about to move, "there is an old prophecy that this year a king shall be slain in Scotland. Now, there are only two kings in Scotland —you and I. As for you," he went on, moving his piece and putting his adversary's king in check, "I give you warning that your life is in danger. As for me"— he paused, and then he added gaily, "I mean to take good care of myself!"

Little though he knew it, however, even at that moment he was in imminent danger; and, alas! for human nature, his worst foes were those of his own household.

IV.

CHRISTMAS had come and gone, but the King with his Court still lingered in the old Monastery, unwilling to exchange its quiet, simple pleasures for the feudal magnificence of Edinburgh or Stirling, or the stiffness and formality of luxurious Falkland.

It was the 20th February 1437. Supper was over, and the King and Queen, with all their Court around them,—lords and ladies in glittering silks and velvets, grave statesmen in rich brocaded robes, gay knights and squires pranked out in all the bravery of the latest English fashions,—were engaged in their ordinary evening diversions, when a knock—a loud, long, agitated knock, a knock that would brook no denial—was heard at the door of the outer room, which communicated with that larger apartment in which the company were assembled. The Queen was naturally much alarmed, and so were her ladies. Not so the King, however.

Quietly continuing his game, he turned round to an usher who was standing behind him, and bade him go and see who was there.

He did so, and found himself confronted by an old, shrivelled, ugly, and travel-stained hag.

"Let me in!" she cried, trying to force her way past him.

But the usher was too quick for her. Coming out upon the narrow landing, and shutting the door behind him, he asked her half angrily, half jocularly, what she wanted.

"Let me in!" she repeated with passionate earnestness. "I maun see the King, I maun see himsel! I

hae something to say to him. Oh sir," she continued in a tone of beseeching entreaty, "dinna ye ken me? I'm the same auld woman that would have spoken to him what time his Grace was journeying to the Leith, afore he passed across the Scottish sea. And I had something to hae tell't him. And even noo, if ye wid but let me in, it mightna yet be ower late!"

But neither then nor now do the doors of courts fly open to such peremptory summonses. The thing was impossible, the usher replied. But, at her reiterated supplications, he consented to take the King's pleasure on the subject.

The King, however, refused to see her that night, and bade the usher tell her to come back on the morrow. Either he was not in the mood for listening to any disagreeable communications, or he was persuaded by some of the traitors who surrounded him to defer the interview to that more convenient season which to most of us, as to Festus, never arrives.

The usher returned and delivered the King's message to the woman. She gave him one look, a look that haunted him to his dying day. Then slowly, silently, regretfully, as one who has failed in the battle of life, and yet is loth to quit the field, she departed; and so disappears for ever from her country's history.

An hour later the King called for the *voidée* cup, "and every man depairted and went to rest." The King's chamberlain, Sir Robert Stuart, who was his relative, being grandson of his uncle the Earl of Athole, was the last to withdraw.

When next we hear of the King, he is standing in his dressing-gown "afore the chimney" of his chamber, chatting and laughing with the Queen and her ladies.

He was just on the point of retiring when a great noise and clattering was heard outside, and the glare of torches was seen passing underneath the window.

Like a flash of lightning the thought of Sir Robert Graham, "his deadly enemy," passed through the King's mind, and he called to the Queen and her ladies to bolt the chamber door. To their horror they found the lock had been tampered with. There was no time to barricade it; already the tramp of armed men was heard in the courtyard below; but with admirable devotion one of the Queen's maidens, a young girl of the name of Catherine Douglas, ran forward and thrust her bare arm through the staple. Meanwhile the King rushed to the window, and tried to burst the iron bars with which it was secured. But they were firmly fixed into the stone with molten lead, and resisted all his efforts.

A sudden inspiration seized him.

He remembered that underneath the floor of the room was a small closet or vault, in the side of which was a square opening by which the sewerage was conveyed outside the building. It was large enough to admit of a man's body passing through. If he could reach it in safety before the door was burst open, he might even yet escape. Unfortunately it chanced that but a day or two before he had ordered this exit to be walled up, to prevent his balls being lost in the sewer when he played at "palm" in the open fields beyond.

But he did not remember this at the time. He rushed to the fireplace, seized the tongs, the only instrument handy, and commenced prising up the boards of the floor. With a "myghty" effort he succeeded.

Then, when he had jumped down, the Queen and her ladies replaced the plank.

They were just in time.

Already the door of the outer chamber had been broken open. Walter Straiton, the page who guarded it, was slain, and the traitors were clamouring for admission into the King's apartment.

One obstacle alone remained. It was the arm of the brave girl who had ventured her life for that of her King. It was soon overcome. The poor girl, with her shattered arm hanging helpless by her side—(she was called Kate Bar-lass from that day)—sank down fainting by the side of the door. The next moment the chamber was filled with a crowd of men armed "with swerdes, axis, glavis, billes, and other terribill and ferefull wepons;" and conspicuous among them towered the dark and vindictive form of the dreaded Sir Robert Graham.

Amidst the screams of the ladies, and the "sorrowfull skrye" of the women, the murderers commenced their search for the King, while the poor Queen, "like a creature that had lost her kindly reason," stood by unable to speak or move. Most of her attendants had fled, but a knot of ladies, cowering in a corner of the chamber, filled the room with their cries. At length one of the band, more ruffianly than the rest, approached the Queen and wounded her "full vilanisly." Nay, he would have slain her outright but for one of Sir Robert Graham's sons, who interfered in her behalf.

"For shame of yourself," he cried. "What are you about? Would you hurt the Queen? She is but a woman; let us go seek the King."

The man obeyed; and then, "not witting what she

did or should do, for that fearful and terrible affray," the Queen fled the chamber in her kirtle, "her mantill hangyng about her."

Every nook, every corner, every inch of the apartment, and of those adjoining it, was ransacked for their quarry, but in vain. The beds were searched. They looked under the presses, the forms, the chairs. Not a trace of his presence was to be found. The thing was incomprehensible, for, with barred windows, and every means of exit guarded, unless the King had been a bird, escape seemed out of the question.

At length, completely baffled, they left the room to continue their search in other parts of the monastery.

When they had fairly gone, the King called to the ladies to bring sheets, and draw him out of the vault. They hastened to do so; but in the act of throwing them down one of the ladies, named Elizabeth Douglas, lost her balance, and fell in beside the King. At that instant the sound of heavy footsteps ascending the stone stairs was distinctly heard.

The ladies had but time to let fall the plank, and save themselves by flight, when the room was again filled with the conspirators.

It seems that among the "traitours" was a certain Robert, or Thomas, or Christopher Chambers, who had been in the Duke of Albany's service, and who knew the Monastery well. This man—so contemporary gossip has it—had on no less than three occasions tried to obtain the King's ear in order to "plainly open to him of his danger." But something had always prevented his accomplishing his purpose. It is not unlikely that some suspicion of this may have reached the ears of his accomplices, and it may be that when he

saw he could not get out of it, a consideration for his own safety led him to take a more prominent part in the enterprise than he would otherwise have done. Be this as it may, however, it is certain that it was to his unfortunately intimate acquaintance with the building that the King's death is attributable.

During the progress of the search in the other parts of the building, he suddenly remembered the little vault underneath the King's chamber, and proposed they should return and examine it. Leading them round to the door which led into it, he seized a torch from one of the band, and began to descend its narrow stone stairs.

"The bridegroom's found," he exclaimed, turning triumphantly to his comrades; and, pointing to Elizabeth Douglas, who stood trembling and cowering behind the King, he added with brutal coarseness, "the bride is with him."

As he said this, one "of the said tirantes and traitours, clepid Sir John Hall," went down to the King, with a great knife in his hand. But the King—"a mane right manly strong"—caught him mightily by the shoulders and with great violence cast him under his feet. Seeing this, "another of that Hallis brethyren" descended "for to destroy him." But him the King caught by the neck and threw him above the other, and so severely did he punish them, that a month later, when they were led out to execution, the grip of the King's fingers was still to be seen on their throats.

The next moment James was face to face with his mortal enemy.

When he saw Sir Robert Graham himself standing over him, with his sword drawn, in the narrow compass

of that dark and fœtid vault, the King knew at once that his hour had come.

"I beseech you," he piteously exclaimed, "that for the salvation of my soul, you will let me have a confessor."

"A confessor!" Graham mockingly retorted; "no confessor shalt thou have but this same sword."

And thereupon he smote him through the body.

The King fell.

Lying on the ground in mortal anguish, he earnestly begged for his life. If he would but spare him, he said, he would give him half his kingdom, great lands, much gold. For a moment Graham stood irresolute. But his accomplices, perceiving his hesitation, called to him from above that unless he completed the work his own life should pay the penalty. Then Sir Robert, with the two Halls, "fell upon that noble prynce, and yn full horribill and cruell wise they murdered him."

When he was taken up there were sixteen deadly wounds found on his breast, besides many others in different parts of his body.

V.

A few words more may complete this narrative.

The King being dead, the assassins next went in search of the Queen, but happily they did not find her. "God, in His grace and goodness," says the old chronicler piously, "preserved and kept her out of their hands." Meantime the big bell of the Monastery had sounded the alarm, "and anone forthwith all the Kynges servantes" that were lodged in the courtyard, "and all the peple of the towne, with oone will and oone assent, as the Kynges trewe men and his liege subjectes, come with force and arms, with many a torch, and other lightis, and approached the Kynge's Court." They were too late, however. The murderers had already fled. As the blood-stained band—they are said to have numbered about three hundred—was in the act of passing "the diches of the Kynge's place" they were attacked by Sir David Dunbar, and one of them was slain and another wounded. But the gallant knight had three of his fingers cut off in the affray, and was severely hurt about the head. This seems to have been the only attempt made to oppose their progress.

Sir Robert Graham and the greater part of the assassins fled to the country of the wild Scots, whose borders were within four miles of St. Johnston. But their immunity from punishment did not last long. So diligent was the Queen in her efforts to bring them to justice, and so well were these supported by the Goverment, backed up by public opinion, that within a month they were all taken and executed in Edinburgh.

Sir Robert Stuart, the King's traitorous chamberlain, who had destroyed the lock of the King's room, and Chambers, who had actually found him, were the first to suffer. They confessed their guilt, and died penitent. The Earl of Athole, the King's uncle, whose execution followed, denied that he had ever assented to his nephew's death. He admitted, however, that he had known of the conspiracy, and had kept silence about it in consideration of his grandson's connection with it. Very few people, however, seem to have believed him. He was beheaded, but not tortured, and on the scaffold was adorned with a paper crown, "the which was all abowte depaynetid with jubettes," and on which, for his more despite and shame, were inscribed the words, "Traitour, Traitour, Traitour."

The next victim of importance was Sir Robert Graham himself. His execution was attended with barbarities which show how deeply public morality had been outraged by his crime.

Immediately after his conviction he was stripped naked and paraded through the principal streets of the city in a cart, whilst his executioners, with red-hot iron pincers, tore the flesh from every part of his body. So sickening was the sight that some of the Lords in attendance ordered this "torment" to be stopped. He was then taken down from the cart, wrapped in a rough Scotch plaid, and again cast "with a grete violence" into "sore and full harde prisone."

Arrived at the place of execution, his plaid was rudely torn from his back. But the clotted blood from his previous wounds had caused it to adhere to the flesh, and the pain of its removal was such that he fainted, and "so lay along on the ground more than a

quarter of an owre." When he had "quickened again," still further to add to his "grefe and sorow," his son was disembowelled and quartered before his eyes, and his heart drawn out of his body—"the which hearte," we are told, "lepe thrise more than a fote of heghte, after hit was drawn oute of his body."

This was the climax of his sufferings.

Human ingenuity could devise nothing more agonising. It was followed immediately by his own despatch. The same fate that had been awarded to his son was meted out to him. He was disembowelled and quartered, "and many others moo after hyme."

Finally, with the "heading" of Sir John Hall, the only one of the King's murderers who died actually glorying in his guilt, the terrible tale of the national vengeance was complete.

FATAL FLODDEN.

G. V. Wilson Photo. J. Skinner & Co.

FLODDEN FIELD.

Fatal Flodden.

I.

The Council was over. The hour for evensong had arrived, and James, "sad and dolorous,"—for the meeting in the Lion Chamber had been a heated one, and the King had been forced to listen, not for the first time, to opinions very unpalatable to him in his present warlike temper — had, attended by the officers of his household, crossed the courtyard of Linlithgow Palace, and betaken himself to the old Church of St. Michael's, to make those evening devotions which, libertine though he was, he never on any occasion omitted.

He had need to seek comfort from heaven, for of a truth he had little to expect from man. For the first time since his accession to the throne, now five and twenty years ago, every one doubted his policy. Wittingly, obstinately, unreasonably, he had placed himself in opposition to public opinion. Against the counsel of his wisest advisers, against the wish of his own wife, he was about to plunge the country into war, and who could foretel the result?

For the enemy he had selected to try conclusions with was the most powerful prince of modern days—his own brother-in-law, Henry VIII. of England. The pretexts under which he sought to justify it were of the most

frivolous description—the capture of a Scotch privateer, the murder of a Scotch Warden of the Marches in a Border affray, the refusal to give up certain jewels claimed by his wife, the war presently being carried on by Henry VIII. against Scotland's old ally—France. There was not a single one of those grievances—of those of them at any rate which related to James IV. or his kingdom—which might not sooner or later have been settled by the ordinary methods of diplomacy. As for the "auncient league and allyance," which courteous international fiction assigned to the fabulous days of King Achaius, it existed in theory only. Had not Anne of Brittany, Louis' Queen, playing cleverly upon the King's romantic chivalry, sent him a turquoise ring from her finger, and named him as her true knight, nothing would ever have been heard about it. Yet, for such gossamer wrongs, James was bent upon perilling his own life and those of untold thousands of his subjects.

Already a letter, of the nature of an ultimatum, embodying all these complaints, had reached Henry in his camp before Terouenne. No answer had been received; there had not been time for that. But James was in no mood for waiting. Confident that Henry's reply would be a declaration of war, he had, notwithstanding the strong remonstrances of his Council, issued summonses to the whole "array of his kingdom" to meet him, with supplies for forty days—the longest period for which the feudal host was bound to serve at its own expense—on the Boroughmuir of Edinburgh within twenty days. Meanwhile, like a restless spirit, he was riding all over the land—to-day at Edinburgh, next day at Stirling, the next at Linlithgow—striving by prayers, entreaties, and promises to stimulate the

languid spirit of the country, and to convert his perverse nobles to his own bellicose ways of thinking.

But it was a hard, uphill task. Do what he liked, he could not make the war popular. Go where he could, black care sat behind the horseman. And ever at council or board, at chapel or in his lady's bower, the unwelcome thought would recur to his harassed and jaded mind—What if his summonses were refused? What if the array of the kingdom declined to countenance his foolhardy expedition?

Each day, as the date of his hoped-for army's assemblage approached, the more perturbed became his spirit. Yet he would not quail. He had staked everything,—his kingdom, his life, his honour—on the cast of the die, and he was determined to abide the event.

Almost distracted by his anxieties, but with never a thought of succumbing, he now flung himself on his knees on the small praying desk in front of the throne which he had himself constructed in St. Catherine's aisle, where he was accustomed to make his evening devotions. The last dying tints of a splendid sunset, streaming in through the narrow stained-glass windows, pervaded the little chapel, deepening the shade of its oaken stalls, and colouring with ruby the white coverings of the altar. The soft evening air, perfumed with the smell of new-mown hay—for it was the month of August—came floating up the aisle through the half-open doorway. Above the almost whispered tones of the officiating priest, above the tinkle of the sweet silver bells, he could hear the plash of the swans in the adjoining loch, and the cry of the birds as they flew homeward over its quiet waters. All without and all within that richly dight little sanctuary was restful

and tranquil—all but the heart of one worn and wearied man.

Absorbed, if not in his prayers, at any rate in his own reflections, his head buried in his hands, which rested on the desk before him, he was suddenly startled by a commotion among the lords who stood behind him, and by a voice calling him by name. Looking hastily round, he saw advancing quickly towards him the figure of a man whose dress and appearance at once rivetted his attention. He was clad in a long blue gown, belted with a roll of white linen. His feet were sandalled, his head bare, and his long, yellowish hair, parted in the middle above a high, broad forehead, floated down over his shoulders. He carried a long pikestaff in his hand, and seemed to be about fifty years of age. There was something so extraordinary, so supernatural in his aspect, that no one ventured to oppose his progress, and before the King could realise what had happened, the strange visitant was standing by his side, with his arms leaning on the desk at which he kneeled.

"Sir King!" he said, addressing James without either reverence or salutation, "my mother has sent me to thee. She bids thee not go whither thou art purposed, for the journey will not be to thy good, nor to that of those who are with thee. She bids thee abstain from the advice or counsel of women, for thereby shalt thou be confounded and brought to shame."

Before the King could collect his thoughts to reply the figure was gone. "In presence of the wholl lordis that war about him for the tyme, this man evanisched away," "as a blink of the sun, or the whip of a whirlwind."

Who was he? St. John or St. Andrew, or the Divine Son of Mary himself?

No one knew, and no one knows to this day.

II.

It was not the only warning he received.

A day or two afterwards, leaving the Queen at Linlithgow, the King "haisted" to Edinburgh "to mak him readie, and to mak provision for himself and his armie againe the said day apoyntted."

Much of his time was spent at the castle inspecting his ordnance, of which he had great store, and which, almost for the first time in Scottish history, he intended should play an important part in the coming conflict.

There were seven great cannons in particular, cast by the famous founder Robert Borthwick, and called the Seven Sisters, from which great things were expected. France, too, had sent him a couple of culverines—guns of very great length, each weighing about fifty hundredweight,—and he had a goodly stock of mortars and bumbards. These James was never tired of testing and examining. Often in the bright autumn mornings he would have this or that specimen of his artillery taken out to the fields adjoining the Abbey of Holyrood, where he was lodging, and there fired off under the direction of his master gunners, of whom no less than three had been assigned to the Sisters alone, wakening the slumbering echoes of the Hunter's Bog, and bringing down continuous showers of loose stones and rubbish from the crumbling sides of the steep and weathered Samson's Ribs.

But if James thought by these means to arouse the warlike instincts of the citizens of the capital, he was, to say the least of it, only partially successful. These "monstrous great ordnance," with their "thundering

thumps," discouraged rather than inspirited them. It was all very well for the young and the reckless to rejoice in the hoarse music of these "roaring guns." But

> "Men with grey beards drew to their beds,
> And fast their prayers they poured out;
> Old wives for woe did wag their heads,
> And saints were sought on naked foot."

Not by such horrid means had all the previous victories of the Scots been won. Not thus had their ancestors conquered at Bannockburn and Otterburn, and many another bloody field. It was to the personal valour, the strong thews and sinews, of their fathers that their triumph was due. To trust, as James seemed inclined to trust, to such dreadful engines for success was an implied reproach on the manhood of his army and on the justice of his cause.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the sense of horror which prevailed amongst all the cooler heads of all classes at the thought of the coming campaign. Oppressed with the shadow of impending danger, men viewed the King's preparations with almost the apathy of despair.

Nor was this feeling diminished by an incident which occurred at this time, sufficiently awesome and terrible, one would have thought, to make James pause in his rash and headstrong resolve.

It was midnight. The long narrow High Street of Edinburgh was deserted, and the citizens in their gabled and timbered houses with their forestairs and galleries, were wrapped in deepest slumber, when, from the Market Cross that stood beneath the shadow of St. Giles, a supernatural voice was heard, summoning by name all earls, lords, barons, and gentlemen, and sundry

burgesses of the town to appear before the court of Pluto within forty days from that date. The summons was repeated three times in proper legal form, and then all was silence and quiet as before. It chanced that a certain "Mr. Richard Lawsoun," whose house was immediately opposite the Cross, and who from illness that night was unable to sleep, was in his gallery at the moment when this awful proclamation was made. Calling for his servant, he bade him bring him his purse, and, following an old legal formality, he took out a crown from it and cast it over the stairs, notifying as he did so an appeal from this "summondis and judgment," to the "mercie of God." Long before the forty days had expired the battle of Flodden had been fought —and lost; and of all who were summoned that night not one survived except him who had thus declined "Platcock's" diabolical jurisdiction.

The news of this incident spread through the town "on the morn," and came to the King's ears. But he declined to be influenced by it; nor, says old Lindsay of Pitscottie, would he give credence to any "counsall, signe, or tokin maid againes his purpos, but refused all godlie counsall, quhilk was for the weill of his croun and countrie." Even the prayers of his wife were of no avail. Blinded by the glamour of his own fantastic notions of honour and chivalry, he failed to see that he was really a catspaw in the hands of the French king—an ally who had never done anything for Scotland, and who certainly never would.

But by this time his prospects were brightening. Already from every part of Scotland—

> "From the Hebudes, dark with rain,
> To eastern Lodon's fertile plain,

> And from the southern Redswire edge
> To farthest Rosse's rocky ledge,
> From west to east, from south to north,
> Scotland had sent her warriors forth."

All day long, and all night, too, troops were gathering at the rendezvous. There was no fear now of his summonses being disregarded. Though the war was not popular, though nothing could make it popular, Scotsmen had not yet learned, as they learned a century later, to disobey their king. On the day when James went out to meet his army under the shade of the stately old oaks of the Boroughmuir, he found nearly two hundred thousand good fighting men waiting to receive him.

It was enough to have inspired Cassandra herself.

The wide Boroughmuir—the common moor of Edinburgh—stretching away from the southern walls of the city to the foot of the Braid Hills, was covered with a "martial kingdom's vast array." Hundreds of gaily coloured tents, each displaying its flag or streamer, its scroll or pennon, pensil or bandrol, according to the rank of its occupant, and roughly constructed cabins of white canvas, dotted the green slopes. Here floated the blue silk banner granted to the burgesses of Edinburgh by James III. for the loyal assistance they had given him in 1482 against the "Riever Edward, styling himself King of England." There, firmly fixed into the Hare or Bore Stane—which is still to be seen built into the garden wall of a villa facing the footpath immediately adjoining Morningside Church—highest and midmost among all the rest, flaunted the royal banner of Scotland,—

> "Where, in proud Scotland's royal shield,
> The ruddy lion ramp'd in gold."

Picturesque groups met the eye at every turn. Now it was a cluster of knights in silken scarves, plumed helms, and gilded armour, discussing the prospects of the coming campaign at the entrance to their pavilions; now a party of wild Redshanks from Badenoch, "rough-footed Scots," shaggy as their own mountain ponies, seated on the greensward over their frugal morning meal of oatmeal and water; now a burly band of Haddington yeomen with steel caps on their heads and white "harness" on their backs, which shone like silver in the early sunlight, and anon a clump of saucy pages in tunics of damask and cloth of gold, holding their master's horses barded with velvet and glancing with bullion and bitted with silver, from whose embroidered reins hung little tinkling bells of gold, "marvelous costly and pleasant to behold." Between the groups wreaths of blue smoke, curling in the morning air, showed "where the night watch their fires had made," while on the outskirts of the camp was gathered a vast and motley array of waggoners, sutlers, and camp followers bearing manifest and corporal token that, whatever happened, the Scottish army was determined not to starve.

James received a tumultuous reception as he rode into the camp. Drums beat, cannons fired, cowhorns brayed, brazen trumpets blared forth their most enthusiastic welcome. For the King's personal popularity was still unassailed, and there was "great love betwixt him and his subjectis." Wondrous hardy and diligent in the execution of justice, he loved nothing so well as able men and horses. Pickthanks or cowards had no place in his company, "for he was verrie noble, and though the vyce of covetousness ranged over meikle in his father,

it rang not in himself." Proud with all a Stuart's pride, he was still affable with all a Stuart's affability. In touch with his people as well as with his lords, nothing delighted him so much as to disguise himself, and to ride "through any part of the realme him alone." He would lie "in pure men's houssis, as he had beine ane travellour through the countrie, and would requyre of them whair he ludged, whair the King was, and what ane man he was, and how he used himself towards his subjects, and what they spoke of him throw the countrie. And they would answeir him as they thought guid."

In his appearance he was every inch the King. Of noble stature, neither tall nor short, he was, says the Spanish ambassador describing him to his masters Ferdinand and Isabella, as handsome in complexion and shape as a man could be. He never cut his hair or his beard—both of which were auburn, slightly tinged with red,—and this fashion became him very well. His bearing was martial and manly. He looked best on horseback. He was in the prime of life. In valour, equally as in aspect, he was all that the leader of a warlike and independent people ought to be.

As he stood there on the crest of the hill and surveyed his brave troops encamped on the widespread plain below, what anxious, perhaps what remorseful thoughts must have passed through the monarch's mind! These men whom he had summoned from every part of his kingdom, whom he had torn from their wives and children, from their farms and granges, from their homes, from everything that was dear to them,—did it ever occur to him how few or how many of them would be alive a month hence to bless or curse that

day? Or did he think of his own brave wife, whom he had left sitting with her infant son in that tower chamber of Linlithgow Palace which still bears her name, straining her eyes, blinded with tears, to catch a last glimpse of him as he rode off upon his extravagant journey? Or did his mind revert to that terrible day, five and twenty years ago, when in the forefront of a junto of traitorous lords, he found himself fighting against his own father at the battle of Sauchie Burn? Did the iron belt which he wore round his waist in penance for his treason on that occasion against his King, not remind him of the treason which at that very moment he was contemplating against his people? For what treason was ever greater than to imperil the freedom of a nation to win the empty glory of a knight.

Who can tell? Yet if such thoughts did ever flit across his mental view, they were driven back at once. In the glitter, the glory, the glamour of that brilliant scene, James forgot everything and everybody —but himself.

III.

On Monday, the 22d August 1513, the Scottish army crossed the Tweed at Twiselhaugh and entered Northumberland, encamping that night on the banks of the Till, a small stream that runs into the Tweed.

Here James remained till the Wednesday following, apparently doing nothing beyond issuing an enactment —one of the most curious that appears in our statute book—that if any one was slain or "hurt to death" during the campaign, the feudal taxes—"casualties" as they were called—incident on his death should not be exacted from his heirs.

The King then moved on to Norham, which he invested, but at the request of its captain postponed the siege for a week, to give him an opportunity of communicating with the Earl of Surrey, the English commander, with a view to the rescue of the garrison. No relief came, however, and it was surrendered on the 29th August and razed to the ground. Two other English peels, Wark and Etal, shared the fate of Norham, and then the King sat down before Ford.

This strong "tower of fence" was the property of Sir William Heron, the head of an old Northumbrian family which had lived in it for many generations, and its demolition was one of the principal objects of the expedition. For one of the King's grievances against England was the slaughter of Sir Robert Ker, his chief butler and Warden of the Middle Marches, in a Border raid two years before, and the murderer was John Heron, the half-brother of Sir William. It was a dastardly business, for Ker had been stabbed with a

spear in the back. But Henry VII., who was then king, had done his utmost to show his detestation of such cowardly conduct. John Heron had been outlawed in both kingdoms, and, still further to appease the Scottish King's wrath, Henry had delivered up his brother Sir William to the Scots, by whom he had been imprisoned in Fast Castle in the Merse, where he still remained. James, however, was not satisfied. Nothing would serve him but the demolition of Ford Castle. After a short siege it surrendered, and was levelled to the ground.

The *châtelaine* of Ford, who was living in the Tower at the time, was a beautiful woman, and a scandalous story—invented, we are sorry to say, by the Scottish chroniclers, and industriously propagated to cover, at any rate to palliate, the disgrace of their countrymen's defeat at the now fast approaching battle of Flodden—represents James, whose gallantry was as notorious as his chivalry, falling a willing victim to her charms. From her love-lost captive, so the fiction goes, Lady Heron wormed out all the secrets of his plans and communicated them to the English commander. It was Hannibal at Capua repeated.

But the story will not bear inspection. Far from having leisure for amorous dalliance, other and graver matters demanded every instant of his time. Already the King was beginning to be roughly awakened from the fool's paradise into which his rash confidence had allured him. Already he was beginning to learn how little could what he conceived to be the justice of his cause stand the strain which the privations and hardships of the campaign were daily, hourly, instantly imposing upon his undisciplined and restive soldiery.

Ever since the Scots had entered England the weather had been of the most unpropitious description. Not a single fair day, hardly a single fair hour, had they enjoyed. Now, while they were encamped under the walls of Ford, it seemed to have reached its climax. Piercingly cold, windy and rainy, the sufferings of the troops were of the most severe description. Provisions, too, were running short, and serious differences of opinion had arisen in the nightly councils of the King and his captains over the camp fires. An English herald, Rouge-Croix, had arrived with a message from the Earl of Surrey, desiring James to appoint a day and hour to give him battle. The King would probably have assented, but his officers not only opposed the notion; but had actually the temerity to suggest that the expedition should be abandoned. What was the use of fighting at all, they asked? Had not the national honour been sufficiently vindicated, the national glory sufficiently maintained, by what had already been done? And the French alliance, too; what more could be expected from Scotland? Had not the King fulfilled his word to the very letter by marching his army across the English border? James was in a towering passion. Rather than listen to proposals such as these, he declared, rather than leave the English "unfoughten," he would march against Surrey with a handful of men; and the French ambassador, who was in the camp, backed up the King in his resolution. So the matter ended for the moment. But before the King raised his camp before Ford he found his army reduced by defections to ten thousand men, exclusive of Borderers and countrymen.

Meantime the Earl of Surrey had arrived at New-

castle, where he was concentrating a force well calculated to daunt the courage of any but one so opinionative as James. From all parts of the north of England, from Yorkshire, Cumberland, Lancashire, and Northumberland, from fell and stream, from hill and waterside, the noblemen and gentlemen of the district flocked into his camp, each followed by a burly band of "light and liver lads" armed with pike and bill, bow, and arrow.

Now it was the "Shepherd Lord," Henry Lord Clifford, who for twenty-five long years had tended sheep on the Cumberland hills, till the accession of Henry VII. restored him to his name and honours, at the head of a large band of sturdy retainers clad in curious livery, with broidered dragons on their coats. Now it was the gallant Lord Dacres of Gilsland, with Sir William Bulmer, Sir Marmaduke Constable, "and many other substanciall gentlemen" of the Bishopric of Durham, marching under the banner of holy St. Cuthbert—a cross of red velvet on a white velvet ground, in which was enclosed that "holy relique, the corporax cloth wherewith St. Cuthbert covered the chalice when he said mass." Now it was Lord Conyers, "stout and stiff," in the midst of a tough body of tillmen from Mittonfield and billmen from Nidderdale, with the aged Lord Scrope of Upsall and the grave Sir Walter Ausith. Now it was Sir Edward Stanley of the Derby family, with eagle-crested helmet and shimmering armour, with a gallant troop of Lancashire archers; now the "stainless knight" Sir Bryan Tunstall, conducting his Thurland tenants, recognised afar off by his white armour and banner with its quaint device, "a curling cock as tho' he'd crow;" now the tall Sir Philip Tilney and the

sage Sir William Gascoigne, and Sir John Normanvill with his five hundred doughty burgesses from "the city and ainsty of York."

Despite these cheering accessions to his force, the Earl was far from being free from apprehension; for the mainstay of the expedition had not yet arrived. This was his son Sir Edward Howard, recently created by Henry VIII. Admiral of England for his gallant defeat of Andrew Barton, the Scottish privateer, the capture of whose ships was one of the causes alleged by James for the present hostilities. His fears were none the less that the weather was of the most tempestuous description.

> "For rain down rattling ne'er did cease,
> Till bubbling brooks burst mighty streams;
> Such blustering winds besides there were,
> That day and night the air did sound,
> Which put the Earl into great fear
> Lest his son Admiral should be drowned."

His anxiety was at its height when on Sunday, 4th September, his watch descried a large body of troops advancing upon Newcastle. The sight of them was little calculated to allay his solicitude. They could not be less than two thousand in number; their armour was black as ink, and no one could make out the devices on their arms and banners. Some said they were the Scotch; others thought they were a "force from foreign land;" all, however, agreed that, whoever they were, it would be better to receive them in harness. Hastily arming, they advanced to meet them. By this time the mysterious strangers had approached near enough to let their ensigns be visible. To the garrison's great relief it was seen that they bore St. George's cross on

their standards. A few minutes later and they were greeting the Admiral and his tempest-tossed troops with kisses and embraces, says the old ballad, and every demonstration of sincere and tumultuous joy.

By this welcome accession Surrey's army was now increased to twenty-six thousand men—a sufficient force, in his opinion, to meet the Scots even in a pitched battle.

IV.

NEVERTHELESS, there was a good deal to happen before the final conflict.

The day after the Scots had invested Ford—that is to say, on 30th August, James had sanctioned—for there is no evidence that he actually ordered—an act which the English persist in stigmatising as dishonourable, though seeing that both nations were actually in arms, it is hard to see wherein the dishonour lay.

This was a raid into English territory by Lord Home, his chamberlain, and Warden of the East marches, at the head of seven or eight thousand men. Bursting into Northumberland with banners displayed, they "brent and haryed a great praye." In the words of the old "Ballad of Flodden Field," written by Richard Jackson, the schoolmaster of Ingleton, about fifty years after the battle, and which is full of little details not to be found elsewhere:—

> "They spoil'd and ravag'd all abroad
> And on each side in booties brought;
> The coarser loons got geldings good,
> And droves of kine and cattle caught.
> Most stately halls and buildings gay,
> With sacrilegious hands they burn;
> And this has always been their way
> Whenever they could serve their turn."

But on the way home Nemesis overtook them. As they passed through a field of broom on the plain of Milfield, to the south of Flodden Hill, they were suddenly attacked by an ambuscade of Borderers, hastily collected by Sir William Bulmer of Brumspeth Castle, and put

to flight with the loss of all their spoil, of six hundred men killed, and other six hundred taken prisoners. If the Scots, recounting the tale in after years spoke of this expedition as the Devil's Raid, this, considering its unfortunate ending, is scarcely to be wondered at.

But it was an unlucky beginning, and it did not tend to raise the already flagging spirits of the soldiers. James, however, had burned his ships, and retreat, though it was often, indeed almost daily, suggested, was now impossible.

On Tuesday, the 6th September, the Scottish King and his army crossed the Till and encamped on the hill of Flodden; and from this point in the narrative every movement of the contending parties becomes full of interest.

It is difficult without the aid of a map to describe the scene of this famous battlefield. But if the reader wishes to get a rough idea of the "lie of the land," he must imagine he is looking at a parallelogram of which the top or northmost line represents the Tweed, the western the Cheviot hills, the eastern the deep and sullen Till, and the southern the extensive plain of Milfield. These imaginary lines, it may at once be said, are not geographically correct. They are, however, sufficiently so to give a general notion of the locality.

The western of these lines is the most important, for on it, sloping down to the low ground on the side of the Tweed, from which it is distant about four miles, is Flodden Hill—the last and lowest eminence of one of the straggling spurs of the Cheviot range so numerous in this district of Northumberland. Trees and shrubs have converted what in 1513 was a bare green hill into one of the most picturesque spots in the whole neigh-

bourhood; and from its summit the spectator can take in at a glance the whole bearings of the ground. The actual field is immediately below him on the north. Still further north, or rather north-west, and distant about a mile is Branxton Hill, close to the village of the same name, from which the English with greater accuracy have derived the appellation of the battle. Opposite, between high broken banks, flows the sluggish and sinuous Till. That little farm to the north of Flodden Hill—Encampment Farm, as it is called—commemorates the spot where the Scottish camp was situated. That burn a little further to the north-west is Blinkbonny, which, if we may believe tradition, for three days and three nights ran with blood. And that clump of fir trees on the south of the hill marks the site of the rock known as the King's Chair, on which King James sat watching the movements of Surrey, the English commander, now his mortal enemy, but whom he had known well and intimately in happier times, and from whose hand, as the representative of his sovereign Henry VII., he had, only eleven years before, actually received his gentle and beautiful child-wife.

The same day that James encamped on Flodden Surrey marched to Wooler Haugh-head, about five miles from the field of battle, where he remained till the 8th. A curious accident provided him with a guide through the Glendale hills and passes—a commodity of which he stood much in need.

That very morning as he was about to strike his tents, a mysterious horseman, clad in scarlet, bearing a lance over his shoulder, and with his vizard down, had ridden into the camp, and made straight for Surrey's pavilion. Alighting from his horse and "louting low"

before the Earl, still holding, however, his horse and spear in his hand, he craved his life from Henry's representative. Surrey asked him who he was, and added that, unless he had committed treason, or spilt English blood by murder, he would pardon his guilt whatever it might be.

"As for treason," replied the stranger, "he was clear from it both in deed or thought; and as for murder, Scots some nine or ten he might have slain, but Englishmen—he had never hurt man, maid, or wife."

"Then," said the Earl, "stand up and show your face! A free pardon is granted you!"

He did so, and disclosed to the astonished spectators the well-known features of John Heron, the murderer of Sir Robert Ker.

"John Heron!" exclaimed the Earl, "I thought he had died of the pestilence two years ago, betwixt Newark and Northampton, on his way to London, where the King had intended to put him to death for the slaughter of the Scotch warden."

"He did not die," replied Heron quietly. And then he proceeded to tell the Earl a tale which was none the less marvellous that it was true.

Knowing full well what would be his fate when he arrived in London, yet not daring to disobey the King, he started on his dismal journey. Coming to a certain town on the way where the plague was raging, he gave out that he was infected by it, and by this ruse managed to get left behind. Three of his servants who were in the secret remained with him. By their aid a corpse was obtained and buried in his stead, and the news that he was dead was carried to King Henry. As soon as he thought it safe he started for his own house,

travelling always by night, and there he had remained concealed for the last two years, none "weeting but he was dead" save his wife and the three faithful servitors to whom he owed his life.

It was probably by Heron's advice that the English army, on Thursday, the 8th, instead of taking the direct route to Flodden, made a detour by Doddington, and encamped at Barmoor for the night. So secretly and so cleverly had their movements been effected, that it was not till they were close upon this village, which was only distant about three miles from the Scottish camp, that James knew that the enemy were upon him.

He would not believe the news at first. "Being so indolent," says old Lindsay, "and having no foresicht nor moyane of the countrie," he had lain still, "taking no fear, as ane man incounsallable, who would doe nothing for his lordis and captanes, nor for the safegaird of his hoast, nor weill of his nobles, nor for obteining of victorie." But the moment the intelligence was brought him he shook off his indolence, as if it had been an adder which he had suddenly discovered crawling over his hand. "He lap upoun hors, and road to the heid of ane hill to sie, which, when he saw thame coming so fast fordward, he caused very couragiously and with ane manlie countenance to sound his trumpettis and put his men in array, and ordained to charge his artillerie and mak him all readie."

While he was thus engaged his lordis "past all to ane counsall," to debate the question whether they should give battle to the English commander or not. Before, however, it could assemble, the King had returned from his visit of inspection, and learning what his nobles had been doing in his absence, he disguised himself

and "cam privilie" and attended the meeting. Old Lord Lindsay of the Byres was appointed chancellor of the council—in other words, was moved into the chair; and, being the eldest and most experienced present, his vote was requested first. It was decidedly adverse.

"My lords," said the old man, "you ask my opinion. I will answer you by a similitude. Would an honest merchant hazard his gold rose-noble against the crooked halfpenny of a common gamester? You, my lords, are the merchant. Our Prince is our rose-noble. Yon 'auld crooked carle' the English commander is the 'glyed halfpenie.' If we lose our King we lose all—our realm, our honour, and ourselves. If we win, what do we gain? Nothing but the empty name of victory. My advice therefore is, that if fight we must, we nominate certain lords to take the battle in hand, and remove the King to a place of safety from which he may see the fight, but not take part in it himself." Loud applause followed the rough old soldier's speech.

"Hold!" said the King, suddenly starting up and throwing aside his mantle. "Hold!" he cried, in a voice almost inarticulate with passion. "Shame yourselves if you will, my lords, but you shall never shame me! Whoever declines, I at any rate shall fight with England. As for you, Lord Patrick Lindsay," he added, shaking his fist in the old man's face, "let me but get back to Scotland, and I shall hang you over your own gate."

The lords, seeing the King in a fury, "war faine," says Pitscottie, "to satisfie his pleasour and serve his appetit in all things as he commandit." But before the evening was over at least one other attempt was made to turn the King from his resolution. Old Archibald

Douglas, Earl of Angus, the famous "Bell-the-Cat" of the previous reign, presuming on his age and his services, ventured to remonstrate with the irate monarch.

"Angus, if you are afraid, you may go home," was James's caustic and angry reply.

Bursting into tears the old man turned away, and before morning he was across the Border; but he left his two sons and all his vassals to maintain the as yet untarnished honour of the House of Douglas.

A portentous incident which occurred at this council is related by more than one of the chroniclers. While they were still in conference a hare suddenly started up from amongst them. A thousand daggers, arrows, and other implements were immediately hurled against it, and a thousand voices instantly joined in the hue and cry. But, to the astonishment of all present, it escaped safe and without hurt. It was an omen of ill that few amongst these superstitious warriors could witness without alarm.

Later in the evening an event of a more comforting character took place.

In the midst of all the bustle and preparation for the impending conflict it was reported to the King that a body of troops, clad in green, some three hundred in number, was approaching from the Scottish border. They turned out to be the young Earl of Caithness and a strong body of his vassals—hardy Norsemen from John o' Groat's House and the Ord, full of all the dash and vigour of their Viking ancestors, who had left their homes only the Monday before, and had travelled night and day to be in time to support their King in the battle. But the young Earl was an outlaw, having incurred this tremendous penalty for avenging an old

family feud, and until his outlawry was recalled his services could not be accepted. The King's warm heart was touched with the young Earl's loyalty. He granted him a pardon at once, and as no parchment could be found in the camp, it was written on a drum-head hastily torn out for the purpose. The night following not a single one of these devoted men was alive. No wonder then that to this day it is reckoned unlucky in Caithness to wear green or to cross the Ord on a Monday.

There was, as may well be supposed, little sleep in the Scottish camp the whole of that memorable night. But towards morning James retired to his tent to snatch a few hours' rest. He awoke at daybreak and hastily called for his armour. To his great horror he found that during the night mice had gnawed asunder the buckle and leather which fastened his helmet to his head. Nor was this the only token vouchsafed him of impending woe ; for, coming to the entrance of his tent, it was seen that the canvas which enveloped it was covered with a blood-coloured dew.

Undeterred, however, by such threatening omens, James proceeded to make his arrangements for the fight.

V.

Up to this point, reckless though his designs had been, James had shown marked ability in putting them into execution. All his movements had been characterised by a prudence and sound judgment which one would not have expected from a man so headstrong. Nothing could have been better chosen, for instance, than his selection of a position. Within two miles of Scotland, on the side of a hill enclosed with "great mountaynes" on three sides, and with the Till with its steep broken banks protecting it on the other, it was, in the words of the English commander, "more like a fortress or camp" than a battlefield. There was access to it only in one way, namely, by crossing the Till, and this passage was defended by his ordnance, "to wit," says a contemporary tract, "v. great curtalles, ij. great calverynes, iiij. sacres, and vi. (seven) great serpentynes, as goodly gounes as have been seen in any realme." Any army attempting to pass the river would have been galled by the Scottish artillery. If it got over at all, it could only have been with very considerable loss.

The English were furious when they discovered the strength of the Scots' position. Knowing the King's weakness, Surrey, the day previous—perhaps before leaving Wooler Haugh-Head—sent Rouge-Croix to him with a demand, which sounded very like an order, to come down and fight him like a man on the plain of Milfield. James refused to see the herald, but he sent back a dignified message to the effect that it was not for a mere Earl to dictate to a Prince, and that he would "kepe his grounde and felde at his

own pleasour, and not at the assignyng of Therle of Surrey."

As the King was not to be drawn by "brave words," Surrey determined to resort to a stratagem to effect his purpose. On the night of the 8th he had, as we have seen, encamped under Barmoor Wood. But as yet he had given no indication of any definite intention to attack the Scots. But on the morning of the 9th, striking his camp at daybreak, he had turned sharply to the eastward, and crossing the Till—his van by the bridge at Twisel, his rear by a ford about a mile higher up—he had suddenly disclosed his hand by marshalling his army in battle array on the field of Branxton. By this clever manœuvre he cut off James' army from the base of its operations, and forced him, if he desired to fight at all, to fight on ground of his opponent's choosing.

How, when he saw what the enemy was about, James did not march along the left bank of the river and intercept their coming is incomprehensible. It is said that, when it was observed that the English van were about to cross the bridge, Robert Borthwick, his master gunner, besought the King to allow him to bring his artillery to bear upon them. So confident was he of the success of his proposal, that he staked his life on the total annihilation of the English army. James indignantly declined. What he wanted was a pitched battle, a stand-up fight, conducted in strictest accordance with the rules of chivalry. He scorned to shoot his opponents down as if they had been a covey of partridges.

Now that Surrey had taken the initiative an entire change of plan was necessary on the part of the Scots. Accordingly James gave orders to his troops to move

and occupy the little eminence called Branxton Hill, on the south side of the village of the same name—a fairly good position for a defending force, but not nearly so advantageous as that which he had been thus cleverly intrigued into resigning.

Soon the camp was in motion. Marching in two divisions, the one under the command of the Earl of Huntly and Lord Home, the other under that of the King, they filed in lengthy line along the banks of the Till. "The commanders of the different divisions and men-at-arms were clad in mail from head to foot, highly polished and mounted on chargers of great power and mettle. The Borderers rode horses of less strength and elegance, but of great speed and activity, and their armour was generally of a lighter description, more adapted for men accustomed to sudden forays, or for pursuing a routed enemy. The foot soldiers," who were all armed with long spears, "were clad after the custom and manner of that part of Scotland from whence they came. Those from the towns wore the steel cap and gorget, with a light coat of mail, fitting closely to the body, but in no way impeding either the arms or the legs. The men from the Lowlands wore the iron cap, fastened under the chin with scale-iron clasps, and their coats or jerkins were made of leather or strong linen, quilted with light scales of wire overlapping each other, but perfectly flexible and strong, and proof against the arrow point." Foremost among these doughty heroes were to be seen the gallant Soutars of Selkirk,—the lads "who sew the single-soled shoon"—destined that day to acquire an inheritance of glory which has descended undimmed and untarnished to modern times; and the brave and independent men of Hawick, whose mys-

terious slogan, handed down to them from their Scandinavian ancestors—

"Teribus ye Teri odin,"

was soon to be heard wherever and whenever the fight was hardest; and the mettlesome hinds of East Lothian, and the weather-beaten shepherds from Ettrick's banks and Yarrow's peaceful vale. Behind them came the Highlanders, with eagles' feathers stuck into their blue bonnets, and armed with long two-handed swords and battle-axes, and carrying on their left arm their round targes of wood covered with leather. Then came the artillery, under the charge of Robert Borthwick; and the rear was brought up by a long, motley, and useless train of sutlers and camp-followers.

The short march was conducted in perfect silence. Not a sound broke the early morning stillness, except the cry of a passing peewit, or the bark of a dog from one of the shepherds' huts in the hollows among the hills. The mist, too, lay thick over the low-lying ground by the river side; while the smoke from the abandoned camp—for James had set fire to all his huts and booths before leaving Flodden—helped still further to conceal the approach of the Scots.

It was not till they were within a quarter of a mile of the enemy that the two hosts became aware of each other's presence.

Both at once commenced making preparations for the fight.

Seeing that the English army was divided into three "battles," the right and left of which, however, were subdivided so as virtually to make four, the Scots adopted a somewhat similar arrangement. The English, of course, were on the north, with their backs towards

Scotland; the Scots on the South, with their backs towards England. Each army thus faced its own country.

The right battle or squadron of the English was commanded by the Admiral and his brother, Sir Edmund Howard; the left by Sir Edward Stanley, son of the Earl of Derby; while the centre was led by Surrey in person. Behind them was a reserve of cavalry under the command of Lord Dacres of Gilsland.

Opposed to the right battle of the English were two Scotish squadrons, the one led by Lords Huntly and Home, the other by Lords Crawford and Montrose. James commanded the centre, while Stanley's squadron was pitted against a compact body of Highlanders and Islesmen under the command of the Earls of Lennox and Argyle. The Earl of Bothwell commanded the reserve which consisted of the flower of the Lothians.

The "battle" commenced about four o'clock in the afternoon. Which side first began it is doubtful. Some authorities say that the signal to advance was given by Surrey, after his son the Admiral had sent him the Agnus Dei from his breast, as a token that he was ready. Others hold that the impetuous Scots were the aggressors. This, however, is certain, that the first incident in the fray was a furious charge by Huntly and Home against that portion of the English vanguard which was led by Sir Edmund Howard. It was successful beyond the Scots' wildest expectations. The English were totally routed. The Cheshire men fled. Howard's banners were thrown down. He himself was thrice stricken to the ground, and forced to take refuge with his brother, the Admiral. The rout was in imminent danger of becoming general, when Lord Dacre galloped up with

his cavalry. His timely succour checked the wild career of the Scots. The Admiral, perceiving the critical position of affairs, now joined Dacre with his veterans, and by their united efforts the tide was turned against the Scots. Huntly's battalion was driven back with great slaughter, while Home's men, who were chiefly Borderers, and many of whom, under the belief that the day was over, had dispersed to pillage—were cut down almost to a man. This done, Dacre and the Admiral turned their attention to the Scotish squadron under the command of Lords Crawford and Montrose. It met the English charge with spears levelled, and a desperate fight ensued.

Meanwhile the two centres, under Surrey and James respectively, were at close quarters. James, utterly oblivious of his duties as a commander, and bent only on winning the glory of a knight, placed himself at the head of his lances and billmen and attacked the English with such effect that their ranks were broken and Surrey's standard was for a moment in danger. At this juncture, the Admiral and Dacre, who by this time had been successful over Crawford and Montrose, came up to Surrey's assistance, and turning their whole strength against the flank of the Scottish centre, would have thrown it into utter confusion but for the arrival of Bothwell and his yeomen, which enabled the Scots to keep their own.

While this was going on, the left "battle" of the English under Sir Edward Stanley had got into collision with the double division of Lennox and Argyle. The hardy clansmen of whom it was composed, casting off their boots and shoes, and with battle-axes raised aloft, sprang like wild-cats at the throats of the English archers

posted behind the pikemen, already seriously disconcerted by the pelting rain which dashed against their faces, and the strong wind that interfered with their arrows' flight. The English spearmen stood firm, and the mountaineers, their force spent, not having time to recover themselves before their charge was returned, were speedily flying before the face of their enemies, leaving their two gallant leaders, Lennox and Argyle, dead on the ground.

All this time James, surrounded by a band of devoted nobles, was grappling with the English commander. Huntly had joined him already, having "called his men togidder by slughorns and sound of trumpet," but Home had declined to second his brother commander on the plea that "he does weill that does for himselff," and that having already done his part in the fight, "it were well to latt the rest doe theirs as weill" as he had done. He retired accordingly with his Borderers to the outskirts of the field, and set himself to guard the as yet unused artillery, which was now without a commander, Robert Borthwick, who had charge of it, having been slain early in the day.

The little band of which the King was the centre fought with all the courage of despair. But from the first its case was hopeless. The ground was slippery with blood; the odds to which it was opposed were immense; the foemen with whom it had to struggle were the pick of English chivalry. When at last the King fell, pinned with an arrow and mortally wounded in the head by a bill, piles of dead lay heaped up around him, and he himself was but a few paces off from the English Earl, his great antagonist.

Still the battle raged. Though the King was dead,

no one knew for certain with which side victory lay. The Scottish nobles had formed themselves into a circle round the King's dead body, and when darkness fell they were defending it still.

It was not till morning broke that the English knew that they had gained the field. Then, indeed, they realised the greatness of their victory. Not a living Scot, except those that were stretched out wounded on the plain, was to be seen. Their artillery, including the Seven Sisters and the two French culverines, from which so much had been expected, was found standing deserted on the side of the hill. Ten thousand Scotsmen lay dead on the field; the noblest, the wisest, the bravest in the land were piled up stark and stiff round the dead and naked body of their beloved but headstrong King.

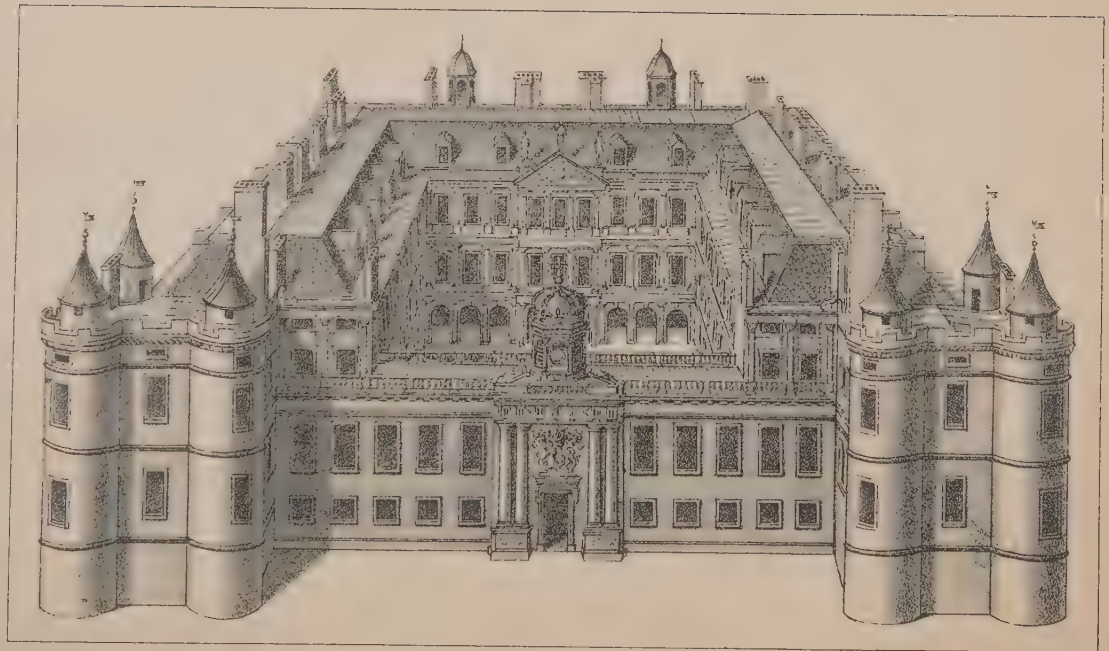
What became of that body is a sad satire upon kingly greatness. Stripped and plundered, it lay on the field unregarded, till late in the afternoon it was recognised by Lord Dacre. It was then taken up, conveyed to Berwick, and there embalmed and "lapped in lead." From thence it was taken to Newcastle, and thereafter to Richmond, from which place it was removed by King Henry's command to the Monastery of Sheen. At the dissolution of that house in the reign of Edward VI., it was thrown into a lumber room, where it lay untouched until some workmen found it, and "for their foolish pleasure hewed off the head." They did not carry it away, however, but left it lying beside the trunk. One day, in the following reign, Lancelot Young, master glazier to Queen Elizabeth, happening to enter the closet in search of some materials for his work, discovered it, and perceiving a sweet savour to come from thence,

and seeing this same head, dried from all moisture, and yet the form remaining with the hair and beard red, he brought it away with him to London, where he left it "for its sweetness" for a time in his house in Wood Street, but in the end caused the sexton of his parish church (St. Michael's, Wood Street) to bury it amongst other bones taken out of their charnell.

No more disastrous, no more tragic conflict than this fateful field is to be found in the whole annals of the kingdom; none has ever evoked such expressions of national lamentation. For the sorrow and its cause were both alike universal. Heavily though the blow had fallen on the inhabitants of the Border counties, though "the flowers of the forest were a' wede away," they were far from being the only or even the greatest sufferers. From Maidenkirk to John o' Groat's nothing but "sighin an' moanin'" was to be heard throughout the land. "It was reported to the Court of England," says Burton, our latest historian, "that of the Scots army but one man of note—the Lord Home—remained alive; and long afterwards it was said that you could not point to a worshipful family in Scotland that did not own a grave in Brankstone Moor."

THE SLAUGHTER OF DAVIE:

A TRAGEDY AT HOLYROOD.



J. Skinner & Co.

OLD VIEW OF HOLYROOD PALACE.

The Slaughter of Davie.

I.

Between five and six o'clock on the morning of Sunday, the 29th July 1565, the Abbey Church of Holyrood, now called the Chapel Royal, presented a brilliant and dazzling spectacle.

The bright morning sun, streaming through its grand old storied eastern window, illumined the fane with a flood of warm and richly tinted light, paling into insignificance the innumerable candles that burned on the high altar, and glorifying a scene that was destined to become historical.

For the splendid crowd that had assembled at that early hour within its hoary walls, the gorgeously attired priests, the magnificently bedight chapel, with its wealth of golden and silver plate, its pictures, its shrines, and its hangings, its clouds of incense, and its solemn music, were there to dignify and adorn a Royal wedding —the wedding of Mary Stuart with Henry Darnley.

More than once in the history of the ancient Abbey had its church been used for similar services. In 1449, James II. had here been married to Mary of Gueldres; in 1469, James III. had been wedded to Margaret, "the King's daughter of Norway, Dasie, Swasie, and Denmark;" and in 1503, the Queen's grandfather, James

IV., had knelt with his child-bride Margaret Tudor, before its high altar, and received the nuptial benediction.

But it had oftener been employed for very different solemnities. Royal burials had been more frequent than Royal marriages. It had been more accustomed to the sable trappings of woe than to the golden embroideries of joy. Nor even now, amidst its exuberant manifestations of gladness, did it seem altogether to be able to throw off the gloom and sadness of its earlier associations.

For when the Queen entered, led between the Earls of Lennox and Athole, it was noticed, not without a certain apprehension natural to a superstitious people and to those superstitious times, that she "had upon her back a great mourning gown of black, with a great wide mourning hood, not unlike to that which she wore the doleful day of the burial of her husband Francis II." People said, too, though certainly it was but idle gossip, that her expression, if not actually mournful, wanted that rich full glow of felicity that every happy bride ought to wear. Doubtless the memory of another and an earlier wedding ceremony, more splendid even than this, in which she had also played a principal part, was present to her that July morning, and cast its slight shade over a face which as yet more often reflected the sunshine of her gay, blithe, and gleesome disposition, than was overcast either with thoughts of the past or with apprehensions for the future.

Standing there at the foot of the altar steps, with her four Maries and a resplendent court of gaily attired nobles behind her, waiting for the two Earls who had conducted her thither to return with her affianced husband, she seemed, indeed,

> "A daughter of the gods
> Divinely tall, and most divinely fair."

In these iconoclastic days the transcendent loveliness of our one Scottish Queen, which hitherto has been accepted almost as a matter of faith by every loyal Scotsman, has been disputed. Yet, if compelled to admit that her beauty, from an artistic point of view, was neither so pure nor so perfect as that of Malcolm Canmore's queen, St. Margaret—her only competitor in this respect in Scottish annals—no one will deny her majesty or her grace, her queenly carriage, her exquisite proportions, or her surpassing fascination of form and feature. Mary, if not the most beautiful woman of her time, was undoubtedly the most attractive. The charms of her manner and her mind were infinitely greater even than those of her body. Of one thing there can be no doubt—she was much too good for the weak and vicious youth she was now about to wed.

Nevertheless, as he strode down the nave in his splendid dress of white satin and gold, with his father on his right and the Earl of Atholl on his left hand, to take his place by the side of the Queen, he was a goodly enough lad to look upon. No one could truthfully call him, perhaps, either handsome or aristocratic; but he was young and well-grown and fresh, and he certainly was not ill-favoured. He was exceedingly tall, and not overburdened with flesh. His hair was dark brown and somewhat thick, his moustache full and carefully tended. His complexion was florid, his face pleasant enough when he smiled; but his expression was sensual and selfish, and his features were commonplace and characterless, if not absolutely weak.

The well-known picture of Darnley in Holyrood—if authentic, which is doubtful—scarcely does him justice. Still, if the Queen married him, as some writers have

asserted, for his good looks, manly beauty must have been scarce in the sixteenth century.

When the Queen and Darnley had taken their places the ceremony immediately commenced by the proclamation of their banns for the third and last time. Then a notary took instruments that no objections had been taken to the marriage, and then the officiating priest, the Dean of Restalrig, President of the Court of Session, began to read the solemn offices of the Church. The obligatory words were spoken by both the spouses in firm and audible tones. Darnley placed three rings—the middle one a magnificent diamond—on Mary's finger, and as they knelt before the altar the priest pronounced them man and wife.

The ceremony over, Darnley rose, kissed his wife, and with a low obeisance left the church, accompanied by his suite. Mary remained till the mass which followed was ended; then she rejoined her husband in the Palace.

The bride and bridegroom met after their short separation in Mary's bedchamber, and there a merry little scene ensued. The Queen, who, of course, was still in her mourning weeds, was now entreated by her husband and the gay crowd which filled the room to lay them aside, and "to give herself to a pleasanter life." But, "more for manners' sake than her grief of heart, as I believe," says the English ambassador, in the interesting account he wrote home of the ceremony, "she made some pretty refusal." Whereupon all the courtiers who surrounded her—"every man that could approach her"—went up and plucked a pin from her garments, until further resistance on Mary's part was plainly in vain. Then she retired and changed her dress.

When she returned, dinner was announced. She was conducted to the banquet "by the whole nobles," amidst the blare of trumpets and the acclamations of a crowd that filled every corner of the royal apartments. As the entered this dining-hall, which was probably the room adjoining her chamber, now known as her Audience Room, a largesse was proclaimed, and "money thrown about the house in great abundance, to such as were happy to get any part."

Darnley and the Queen dined alone at a cross table "upon the upper hand." The Earl of Atholl acted as her server, the Earl of Morton as her carver, and the Earl of Crawfurd as her cupbearer. Three other Earls —Eglinton, Cassilis, and Glencairn—performed like offices for her husband.

After dinner, which, of course, was in the forenoon, Sunday though it was, they danced awhile. Then Mary and Darnley retired and were not seen again till supper time. "As they dined so did they sup. Some dancing there was" after it, and then the party broke up.

Amongst the crowd of courtiers who were particularly conspicuous in the gay doings of that bright wedding, was the Queen's foreign secretary, David Rizzio. From the way in which he meddled with all the arrangements, from the airs of importance he gave himself, from his triumphant carriage and magnificent dress, from the court that was paid him by some, and the scarcely veiled contempt with which he was treated by others of the proud nobles present, a stranger might not unreasonably have inferred he had some special cause for congratulation on the result of the events of the day.

And so indeed he had.

If the match was not altogether of his making, he had had a considerable hand in it.

When the subject of Mary's marriage was being bandied about like a ball between the Courts of England and Scotland, and every day was bringing forth some new and critical complication, Rizzio had thrown the whole weight of his influence on the side of "yonder long lad," as Elizabeth called Darnley, and had stood by and countenanced him in his battle against the Queen's half-brother Moray, and all the Protestant Lords. But it was policy rather than religion that had prompted this action. Rizzio's concern for his mistress's interests was sincere, and he was clear-headed enough to see that a marriage with the first Prince of the blood in England and with one who was a Stuart, like Mary herself, was a far better match for her than with any foreign Prince, however exalted, or even than with "her dearest sister and cousin Elizabeth's" favourite, the Earl of Leicester himself.

Perhaps, too, the astute Italian, with his unlimited ambition and his *parvenu* instincts, did not altogether lose sight of its possible relation to his own affairs. Very probably he thought that Henry Darnley's pliability of character was not the least of his qualifications. A Prince who owed so much to him was not unlikely to forget his services, and might easily be persuaded to follow his counsels.

As for Mary, she did so already.

So far he had won, and he could afford to laugh accordingly. But no one knew better than Rizzio the cost at which he had achieved success.

To the great body of the nobles, to the bulk of the nation generally, he was a *persona ingrata*, alike from

his mean birth, his nationality, his sudden rise, and the confidence with which his Sovereign honoured him. It was all very well for Mary to ask why the nobles should think they had a monopoly of the business of State, and why, because he was not of patrician lineage, she should be deprived of the services of a faithful and capable counsellor. But Rizzio knew as well as his mistress that this opinion was shared by all classes in the kingdom, and that they also shared the prejudices that attached to him as an upstart and a foreigner.

Nor was this prejudice unnatural, however unreasonable we may nowadays, and indeed should, consider it.

All that was known, all that could by the exercise of the most anxious search be discovered of this lucky and highly favoured adventurer, was that he was a native of Turin, who had come over to this country four years before in some menial capacity in the train of Moretti, the Piedmontese Ambassador; that he had entered the Queen's service as a musician; that being a clever, astute, longheaded man, and a skilled linguist, he had been appointed by Mary to succeed Raulet, who conducted her foreign correspondence, and that from that moment he had gone on rising in the confidence and estimation of the Queen.

So far as appearance went, he was a fairly well-favoured individual.

Some writers have described him as old, ugly, and deformed; others have asserted that he squinted. This is a portrait limned by the hand of prejudice.

An original picture of him, painted in 1564, lends no colour to these statements. It shows him as a man of about thirty years of age, with dark complexion, moustache, and beard. The features are good and

regular, the eyes particularly soft, almost languishing. There is a look approaching to feminine softness in the curve of the mouth and the fulness of the lips. The brow is low, but neither cunning nor forbidding; and over the whole face there rests a half languid, half melancholy expression not uncommon to natives of his country. He is dressed in a plain suit of some dark material, with a small ruff round his neck, and carries a lute in his hand. On the whole, the portrait represents him as a man of a pleasing and agreeable exterior—not actually handsome, perhaps, but certainly far from repulsive.

There can be no doubt, however, that the unfortunate foreigner's head was turned by the unexampled rapidity of his advancement. It was the old proverb of the beggar on horseback exemplified. He was very indiscreet. He provoked the resentment of the haughty courtiers with whom he was brought in contact, as much by his accomplishments as by his officiousness and arrogance.

They showed their resentment, however, in a way that did but little credit to their rank or manners. They jostled him on the stairs; they spoke at him rather than to him. In a hundred little ways they conspired to insult and affront him.

But Rizzio never for a moment let himself be provoked into retaliation. He was biding his time. For the clerk—he was nothing else—aspired to be minister. The gift of some escheated estate and a peerage he knew would follow, and then—woe to his aristocratic enemies! Once he was "even as themselves," he would be able to use his influence with Mary to their destruction.

II.

THE marriage turned out a failure.

The moment Darnley had obtained the object of his ambition—the title of King—he began to kick over the traces. His vanity, his conceit, his unutterable folly—above all, his low debauchery, soon estranged Mary's affections from him.

As for him, it may be doubted whether he had ever loved her. She was twenty-three; he was nineteen. She was a woman of the highest culture and accomplishments; he was a mindless boy, whose tastes lay only in coarse dissipation. She was a woman who from her childhood had been conversant with all the deepest secrets of statecraft; he was a boor, whose capacity for business was no better than that of his groom.

Mary, deeply engrossed in foreign politics—a league amongst all the Catholic Powers for the extermination of Protestantism was then agitating all Europe—had naturally occasion to avail herself largely of Rizzio's services, and to be much in his company. Darnley immediately conceived a desperate jealously of the poor secretary, and, like the foolish boy that he was, could not keep his suspicion to himself.

The moment that it became known that there was friction in the relations between the King and the Queen, the factious agitators who were watching to trouble the waters of Scottish politics determined to make capital out of it to serve their own ends.

There was one party in particular whose fortunes were at that time at the lowest ebb, but who not very long before had been the controlling party in the State.

This was the party of Knox and Protestantism, led by Moray, the Queen's half-brother, and it included among its members such influential personages as the Earls of Argyll, Glencairn, and Rothes, and the Lords Boyd and Ochiltree.

They had been very unfortunate of late in all their affairs. The religious movement with which they were identified had not been making much progress. It was pitted against the personal influence of the Queen, and that for the moment was dominant. Politically, too, all their projects had miscarried. They had run to Elizabeth for assistance, and were willing to do anything and everything she desired, if only she would grant them her countenance and money.

What their real object was, was to dethrone Mary, in respect that she was a Catholic, and to put Moray or some other creature of their own choosing on the throne. But they were ready to accept any one whom Elizabeth chose to nominate, and if Mary could not be superseded they were ready to accept the next best thing—a Protestant husband to their Catholic Sovereign. Elizabeth was ready enough to coquette with them, but when it came to be a question of "charges" that was quite another thing.

To make a long story short, they had failed to obtain from that thrifty, shifty, albeit intensely Protestant princess the succour they desired, and they were wallowing in the Slough of Despond accordingly.

At home, too, nothing but ruin stared them in the face.

They had opposed the recall and rehabilitation of Lennox, the father of Darnley; they had even plotted against the life and liberty of Darnley himself. But

now that party had secured the ascendency, and Moray and his accomplices were in dire straits indeed. On the 22d August they had been declared rebels. At the Parliament that was soon about to meet their estates were to be forfeited.

While this was their condition, another party was in course of formation in Scotland. This was the party of "the King's friends," as we may call them, and it was led by Morton, the Chancellor. Their aim was practically the same as that of the Moray party—political ascendency; but they proposed to attain it in a different way.

Morton, one of the shrewdest, deepest, craftiest of Scottish statesmen, had little difficulty in taking Darnley's measure. He was willing that Darnley should be King—King, that is to say, in something more than title—provided the power was left in the hands of himself and his friends.

Darnley had already applied to Mary for the Crown matrimonial, by which, in the event of her death, he would reign during his lifetime as absolute monarch. But Mary, knowing his character, and in the interests of her yet unborn child, had refused it, although, as Darnley and his friends asserted, she had promised it before. She had refused mainly on the advice of Rizzio.

The policy of the Mortonites, accordingly, was clear. They had simply to fan Darnley's resentment into flame by encouraging his jealousy and fostering his daily increasing suspicion of the secretary: then the rest would come without further effort on their part.

Neither of these two parties were strong enough to

act alone; so, if anything was to be done, the first thing to be attempted was to bring them into co-operation—a difficult task truly, but it was ultimately accomplished. The next was to decide on a policy.

This was even more difficult.

But there was one point on which no diversity of opinion was likely to rise; and that was, that, to clear the path for further operations, the Queen's troublesome French secretary should be got rid of.

Every day of their lives, both sets of conspirators found him more than ever in the way. The more his influence grew, the greater the abasement forced upon all of them. Why, even Moray himself had of late seen it necessary to propitiate him with the "propine" of a costly diamond!

Accordingly, it was determined to slay him.

But such was the mistrust which mutually prevailed, that neither party would take a single step until their criminal and treasonable alliance was reduced to black and white.

Nothing could be more business-like than the way this was gone about.

Two "bands" (bonds or obligations) were prepared and executed with due legal solemnity. In the first of these, the contracting parties agreed to the cutting off of "certain privy persons, wicked and ungodly, not regarding Her Majesty's honour, ours [that is, Darnley's], nor the nobility thereof, nor the common weal of the same, but seeking their own commodity and privy gains, especially a strange Italian called Davie." In the second, they arranged the recompense that each was to obtain for his share in this deed. Darnley was to get the Crown matrimonial. Moray and his friends

were to be recalled from exile and restored. As for the Protestant religion, which all throughout in this, as in far too many other instances, was used "as a stalking-horse to shoot other fowl," its establishment was of new granted by Darnley to "the said earls, lords, and their complices."

Before the meeting of Parliament, which had been called for the 4th March 1566, all the arrangements had beeen completed. It only remained to put them into execution.

III.

The Holyrood of Mary Stuart was a very different building from the Holyrood of the present day.

The imposing French palace which now exists was the work of her great-grandson Charles II., and was not erected till a hundred years after her death. The home of Mary Queen of Scots was neither so grand nor so magnificent.

It was a comparatively modern building; for though the old Abbey of Holy Cross had been erected by David I.—"that sair sanct for the Croun"—its conversion into a Royal residence dated only from the time of her grandfather, James IV.; and the greater part of it had been built by her father, James V. He it was who added the northern tower, where the rooms now known as Queen Mary's apartments are situated. A very handsome building he made of it, and it was far and away the most splendid Royal residence in Scotland.

As for its furnishings, they were for the most part the work of Mary herself. Every room bore evidence of her refined and elegant taste. The Gobelins tapestry which still adorns her bedchamber, and which tells the story of the rash Phaeton attempting to drive his father the Sun-god's chariot, was brought by her from France. The brown and scarlet twilled silk hangings which covered the walls of her little supper-room, the crimson and green fringed draperies of her couch, the beautiful chairs with their carved and crowned backs, the Venetian glass mirrors, the rich marqueterie cabinets, the inlaid tables with their carved and gilded legs—all were fresh,

and bright and new when that gay and light-hearted Queen with her brilliant and pleasure-loving Court occupied the Palace.

The magnificent gloom which like a rich pall seems now to overspread her apartments, arises almost entirely from the associations connected with her name.

When Mary was mistress of Holyrood there was not a more splendid, a more attractive, or a more cheerful abode in all broad Scotland.

The Queen was the light of the household. The kindest of mistresses, the least exacting of sovereigns, the most fascinating of women, she was absolutely adored by all with whom she was brought in contact. "God bless that sweet face," exclaimed one who saw her for the first time, and those who lived with her echoed that sentiment every hour of their existence. She was full of life, and spirit, and courage. Time at the Court of Queen Mary sped swiftly by upon golden wings. Feasts, carousals, tournaments, tilting matches, festivities of every description, were the normal order of things within and without these grey old walls. Every day brought forth some new delight; every night, when the great serges of wax were lighted in their silver sconces, there was music and dancing and card-playing at the Palace.

Knox was right. "Oh, fair ladies," he said to the crowd of gay girls who thronged the ante chamber, "how pleasing would be this life of yours if it could ever abide."

And it might have lasted—longer, at any rate, than it did—but for the policy deliberately adopted by Knox himself and his friends.

The rooms occupied by Queen Mary in Holyrood

House were on the second storey, and were three in number. They all opened into each other, after a fashion more common on the Continent than in this country; and as all three are associated with the tragedy of Rizzio's death, it is necessary to say a few words about each of them.

The first of them—at the top of the main staircase—was the Queen's audience or presence chamber—in modern phraseology, her drawing-room. A lofty, handsome apartment, some twenty-four feet by twenty-two, with panelled roof, lighted by two windows, the one looking towards the north, the other towards the south, its walls still show the ancient tapestry with which it was hung. A small portion of it close to the top of the staircase has been partitioned off. We shall see why presently.

The room which adjoins it was the Queen's bedroom. Occupying the whole length and breadth of James V.'s tower; it was somewhat smaller than the audience room, but the memories it recalls render it, to the visitor, a much more interesting apartment. A window with a deep recess breaks the grim outline of its western wall. On either side of this are two doors opening into two small turret chambers, the southmost of which is known by the name of the Queen's dressing-room, while the northmost—that with which we have most to do—is called Her Majesty's supper-room. Close to this supper-room door, hidden by the tapestry which covers the wall, is another small door, from which access is obtained by a dark, narrow, stone turnpike to Darnley's apartments, which were immediately underneath those of the Queen, on the floor below.

The supper-room is nothing but a mere cabinet,

scarcely twelve feet long, and not nearly so broad, lighted by a small window in the round of the turret, with a fireplace on its northern wall, and a press or armoury for holding bottles built into that on its southern side. Five people would have filled it comfortably; with a table in the middle and a few chairs, this number of persons would have crowded it inconveniently.

In this small room, between seven and eight o'clock of the evening of Saturday, 9th March 1566, Mary was at supper with a few of her more intimate friends and attendants. Her half-sister, Jane Stuart, Countess of Argyll, to whom she was much attached, and her half-brother, Robert, the Commendator of Holyrood, were at table with her; and she was attended by Beaton of Criech, the Master of her Household, Arthur Erskine, the Captain of her Guard, and one or two of her servants.

On a low stool at the foot of Her Majesty's couch, toying with his lute, magnificently dressed, attired in a dressing-gown of damask, furred, with a satin doublet and hose of russet velvet, and with his cap on his head, sat David Rizzio.

Unknown, unsuspected of all within that little room, a ghastly tragedy, an appalling crime, was on the point of being enacted.

Rizzio, indeed, is supposed to have had some warning of his approaching fate. Not many days before, a French astrologer of the name of Damiot is said to have advised him to settle his affairs and leave Scotland without a moment's delay. But he had refused.

"I'm not unaware that I have enemies," he replied; "but I'm not afraid of them. What are they?

Nothing but a flock of ducks. I have but to strike the one, and the rest will lie quietly down."

"You may find them not ducks, but geese," was the astrologer's rejoinder. "Touch but the smallest of them and the whole will attack you; nor will they desist till they have plucked every feather, every particle of down from off your back, and left you lying bleeding, mangled, perhaps dead."

Rizzio shrugged his shoulders, and smiled; he made no other answer.

But now the astrologer's warning was about to be terribly verified.

Already in the courtyard below a band of a hundred and fifty men, commanded by Morton, the Chancellor, was in undisturbed possession of every gate and outlet of the palace. The Queen and all her company were not only prisoners; they were at the absolute mercy of an armed and desperate mob.

The door of the little chamber was open.

Suddenly the tapestry in the adjoining chamber was drawn aside, and through the private door already mentioned Darnley entered. Striding into the tiny supper-room, he sat down beside his wife, and, putting his arm affectionately round her waist, began to converse gaily with her.

A heavy step in the adjacent apartment made Mary turn hastily round.

There, silent and motionless, within the woodwork of the door of her cabinet, like a picture in its frame, stood a tall, grim figure, clad in complete armour. His visor was thrown up, disclosing a haggard face, wasted with illness, and a pair of eyes in which burned a fire which boded no good.

It was Lord Ruthven, whom all present, except the King, believed to be lying on a sick bed, from which it was feared he would never rise.

Advancing one step within the apartment, and pointing with his mailclad hand toward Rizzio—

"If it would please your Majesty," he said, "to let yonder man, Davie, come furth of your presence, for he has been ower long there."

Starting to her feet, the Queen turned upon her husband and asked him angrily "if he knew aught of this?"

Then, without waiting for his answer, she bade Ruthven leave her chamber under pain of treason, adding that she should "exhibite the said David before the Lords of Parliament to be punisht, if any sorte he had offended."

At this moment the tramp of armed feet was heard ascending Darnley's private staircase; the next, the Queen's bedroom was lighted up with the glare of smoking torches, and a crowd of hostile faces appeared behind Ruthven at the door of her cabinet. There, with the treacherous light gleaming in his eyes, stood George Douglas, afterwards titular Bishop of Moray, the King's bastard uncle. There frowned the fierce face of Ker of Faudonside. Others that Mary knew, alas! only too well, were seen scowling behind them. In not a single one of these angry and excited countenances could be discovered the slightest sign of mercy or of pity.

Rizzio at once perceived his danger. He had drawn his dagger mechanically the moment Ruthven had made his appearance. But he saw it was useless to attempt to use it. He retreated behind the Queen.

Ruthven advanced upon him. The other conspirators followed him. Darnley, taking his wife in his arms, vainly strove to soothe her by telling her that no violence was intended to herself.

"Justice!" cried the trembling wretch, hanging on to the skirts of the Queen's gown. "Justice! save my life, madam, save my——."

He sank to the ground. George Douglas had stabbed him over Mary's shoulder with the King's dagger, which he had snatched from his side. Meanwhile, to prevent her interfering on his behalf, Faudonside held a pistol at the breast of his Queen.

All was now uproar and confusion.

In the scuffle that had already taken place the table, with the lights upon it, had been thrown down. Lady Argyll, however, had caught up a candle, and was holding it above her head. It was the only light within the chamber. In truth it was enough for such a deed of darkness.

Amidst the curses of the murderers, the screams of the ladies, his own piteous and despairing shrieks for mercy, the poor Secretary was torn from the cabinet, and dragged into Mary's bedroom. There he was surrounded by the rest of the conspirators who had been unable to gain admittance into the little supper-room. Undeterred by Mary's presence—for she had followed him into her chamber, retreating, it is traditionally reported, into the embrasure of the window—he was dragged or carried face downwards into the audience chamber beyond, his assailants stabbing him as they went along.

It had been the intention of the murderers to take him down the main staircase and despatch him in the

courtyard; but before they reached the "Queen's far door of the upper chamber," their unhappy victim was dead.

There accordingly they left him lying in a pool of blood, the stains of which were for generations after visible to credulous eyes.

When, a little later, his mangled body was taken downstairs to the porter's lodge, and laid on an old oak chest which stood there, preparatory to being got ready for burial, fifty-six wounds, of which thirty-four were on the back, were found upon it, and stuck ostentatiously through the heart, to show that he had sanctioned the deed, was the King's dagger.

"Ay," said the porter's assistant, as he stripped off its fine clothes, "such has been his destiny! For this chest was his first bed when he entered upon this place, and there now he lieth again—a most ingrate and misknown knave!"

IV.

At what time Mary first became aware that Rizzio was actually dead is not clear. Probably she had little need of telling.

When she had seen him dragged out of her apartment she must have known very well that she would never see him again alive. But she made no effort, or she was not permitted, to follow the crowd. Neither did Darnley. Husband and wife retreated to Mary's cabinet, and there an angry altercation ensued.

Mary wished to know what share of responsibility the King had in the scene that had just been enacted. Darnley, anxious to evade the inquiry, sought to turn the tables by reproaching his wife with her change of demeanour towards him "since yon fellow David fell in credit and familiarity" with her.

While it was going on, Ruthven, faint and exhausted, and fresh from the awful tragedy which had now been consummated, staggered into the room.

Mary's first question was after Rizzio's safety.

Ruthven assured her he was safe and in her husband's apartment, where by this time, he believed the body had been taken.

Darnley at once interposed. Evidently with a view to prevent further awkward interrogations, he resumed the conversation at the point at which it had been interrupted by Ruthven's entrance. Meanwhile Ruthven stood by, edging in a word now and then, and endeavouring to the best of his ability to allay the matrimonial tempest.

At length, finding his exhaustion increasing, he asked

leave to sit down on a coffer, and requested that a cup of wine might be fetched him. After it was brought, feeling himself much refreshed, he proceeded to take a more prominent part in the discussion than he had hitherto done. In fact, till Mary was left to herself for the night, the conversation was between Ruthven and herself exclusively.

It would be wearisome to repeat its details, for after all it was nothing but crimination and recrimination. But it was necessary to refer to it here, because it largely influenced Mary's after action. Almost before the interview was over, she had, with characteristic impulsiveness, determined on the policy which she should adopt. It was a policy of revenge and dissimulation, and being so, who can wonder that it was the fruitful parent of all her future misfortunes ?

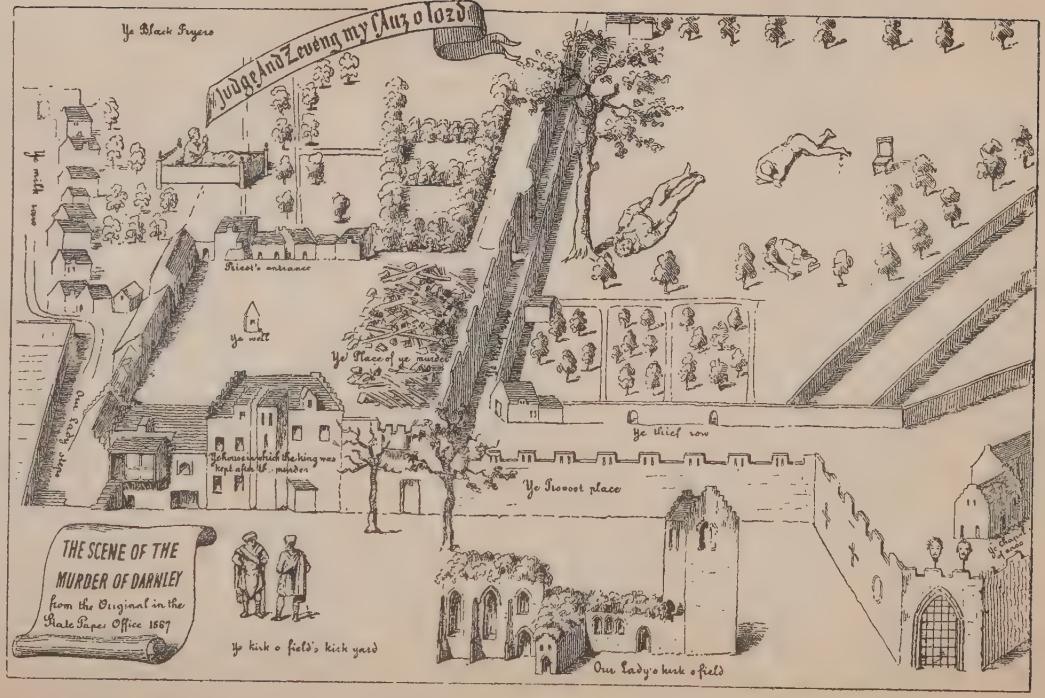
To avenge her Secretary's death she would make use of the very instruments from whom that injury had proceeded. She would lure back the King like a truant haggard to her side. She would be reconciled to the men whom the King had covenanted to befriend. More wily than Vivien, she would entice them on to their own destruction. Not till her feet had trampled on the neck of her enemies would she desist from her vengeful purpose. Not till then would she consider that the death of her faithful servant had been avenged.

Meanwhile she gave orders—at least so runs tradition—that the spot where his body had been found should be partitioned off from her audience chamber, and to appease his wrathful spirit she commanded that his mangled remains should be interred in the royal vault of the Abbey Church. It was an unpardonable indiscretion, for which, as for all others which she had

ever committed, she was destined to make afterwards an hundred-fold atonement. It was absurd to think that such an affront to the feelings of a proud and ancient people, whatever might be the motives that prompted it, could be suffered permanently to endure.

At a later period, when Mary had not even power to select her own burial-place, his body was removed to the adjoining churchyard, the common burial-ground of the parish of Canongate, where a flat stone, bearing some faint vestiges of sculpture, is still pointed out as covering all that is mortal of that "villain Davie."

THE EXPLOSION AT THE KIRK-OF-FIELD.


Ye Black Fryers
Judge and Zeveng my Cauz o lozd
Priest's entrance
ye wall
Ye' Place of ye murder
Ye thief row
Ye Provost place
Ye kirk o field's kick yard
Our Lady's kirk o field
THE SCENE OF THE MURDER OF DARNLEY
from the Original in the State Papers Office 1867

Explosion at Kirk-of-Field.

I.

The ground on which the University of Edinburgh now stands was, in the sixteenth century, known by the name of Kirk-of-Field. Though within the town walls, it could hardly be said to form part of the city. It would be more correctly described as a suburb—an open piece of ground, with here and there a building upon it, frequent clumps of umbrageous trees, gardens, and orchards—a *rus in urbe*.

Here, in the good old days of Catholic supremacy, in close proximity to the little church of St. Mary-in-the-Fields from which the district derived its name, stood a quadrangular range of buildings, consisting of a prebend house or parsonage, an hospital or almshouse, and the necessary offices required for the uses of the clergy who ministered in holy things in the adjoining church of St. Mary. But not long before the date of this story these buildings—always excepting the church, which had fallen into decay—had been secularised, and the ruined hospital—it had been devastated during the English invasion of 1544—had come into the possession of the Duke of Chatelherault, who had restored and converted it into a comfortable dwelling-house, while the prebend house had been gifted to Robert Balfour, a brother

of Sir James Balfour, the Commander of Edinburgh Castle.

Though it bore a grand name, this provost-house was anything but a palatial mansion. Never was there a plainer or a more incommodious dwelling. The English ambassador, Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, describing it in a letter written after the event which made it so famous, spoke of it as a "place fitter to lodge prisoners in than folks at liberty." It was a little house of two storeys, connected with each other at the back by an outside turnpike or winding stair. It faced the west, having its principal entrance from the quadrangle already referred to. But being situated at the very corner of the square, its southern gable joined on to the city wall, and in this gable there was a little postern door which gave access to the kitchen. So tiny was the building, that it contained only four rooms of habitable dimensions. Two of these were on the ground floor; the other two were on the storey above.

Entering by the main door the visitor found himself in a narrow passage which ran right through the house and ended in a back door, passing through which, and ascending the outside turnpike, access was obtained to the floor above. The room on the right hand of this passage was the kitchen; that on the left was a bedroom. Upstairs, the room above the kitchen which had a little window in the gable corresponding to the postern in the room below, was called the "garde-room" or "little gallery," while that opposite was the "best bedroom" of the establishment.

But what was lacking in convenience was made up in amenity. Nothing could be more delightful than the situation of the little house. A narrow lane, known

as the Thief Row, which ran at the back of it, separated it from a pleasant and spacious garden; while further up the same lane, and on the same side, were the still more extensive grounds of the now ruinous Blackfriars Monastery, with their fine old trees, their shady walks, and their prim old-fashioned but delightful paths and alleys. Close beside it, too, forming indeed the central block of the quadrangle, stood the mansion of the Duke of Chatelherault; and other buildings, each with its fields, its orchards, or its gardens, were to be found at no great distance. The slight touch of sadness—"the fennel in the cup"—which is needed to add its highest charm to the gayest and most lightsome landscape, was furnished by the ruins of the little church already referred to, with its surrounding graveyard. But only a captious and jaundiced critic could describe it, as George Buchanan has done, as being situated "among dead men's graves." In short, making allowance for the character of the prevalent architecture, it was much what Morningside, or Merchiston, or even Newington was some thirty or forty years ago.

Whether the house had been standing empty for any length of time we cannot say. But towards the end of January 1567, preparations were evidently in progress for its occupation by a new tenant,—and a new tenant of more than ordinary importance. For now it was rich tapestries for its walls that were seen being carried into it; now a new bed of black figured velvet trimmed with lace of gold and silver, evidently for its best bedroom; now a dais of black velvet for the gallery; now a large bathing vat or a load of cushions and fauldstools; now a green velvet bed for the chamber below. Soon the secret leaked out. The house was

being prepared for no less a personage than King Henry of Scotland himself. He had been very ill in Glasgow with an attack of malignant small-pox—a disease which in those anti-vaccination days the doctors regarded as only second in danger to the pest—and a change of air was requisite. But differences of opinion had arisen as to the choice of a sanatorium. Holyrood lay too low. Darnley himself objected to Craigmillar. At last Bothwell suggested Kirk-of-Field; and as its situation was good, and the surroundings cheerful, this was agreed to. And one evening—it was the 31st January—a great lumbering chariot drew up at the gate, and a poor feeble figure, a figure pale and emaciated with wasting sickness, stepped out, and after some little demur—for up to this moment Darnley was under the impression that the house appointed for his lodging was that of the Duke of Chatelherault—disappeared within its walls.

The King's illness had altered his appearance much; it had altered his character more. There were few traces about him of the proud and boastful boy, whose folly and vices had alienated from him the affections of his wife, the allegiance of his nobles, the love of his friends. He had had time, when lying on his sickbed at Glasgow, to consider the error of his ways; he had had time also for repentance. Thoughts of soberer things now occupied his mind—thoughts of his wasted life, thoughts of death, thoughts of religion. Whether, as some have alleged, he had any actual knowledge of his impending fate may be doubted. But this at least is certain,—he was haunted by thoughts of coming calamity; he felt himself a doomed man, and spoke and comported himself accordingly. Those around him—his wife particularly—tried to laugh him out of his

fears. They persuaded him that these were but the vain imaginings of a sick man. They strove by every means in their power to arouse, to cheer, to amuse him. It was all in vain. Darnley persisted in carrying himself as one under sentence of death; and not even the Queen's endearments—they had been reconciled ten days before—could dispel his fixed idea or his rooted sorrow.

He was perfectly right. A month previous to his removal to Kirk-of-Field his death-warrant had been signed at Craigmillar; and the signatories to the "band," which, after the usual fashion of those days, was entered into for that purpose, were the most powerful lords in the kingdom for the time being.

The conspiracy was promoted by a new party in the State—a party whose rise had been of extraordinary rapidity, and whose principal claim to the favour of the Queen appeared to be that its leaders were perhaps the only lords in Scotland who had not had to do with the "slaughter of Davie."

James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, was the prime mover in the affair, but the Earls of Argyll and Huntly, Maitland of Lethington, the Queen's Machiavelian secretary, and Sir James Balfour were parties to it also. Co-operating with them, too, were many whose hands were not quite so free from innocent blood as were those of the men who took a more prominent part. The wily Morton, the Chancellor, was thoroughly cognisant of it. As for Moray, the Queen's half-brother—the cautious and immaculate Moray, the *decus et tutamen* of the Kirk party in the State—he was willing, as he had been more than once before in his lifetime, "to look through his fingers" at the business, and hold his tongue.

But it was Bothwell who planned the whole affair, and carried it through too, as we shall presently see. He it was who selected the house where the King was to lodge, sent in all the furniture from Holyrood, and made all the necessary arrangements. The trouble he took would have been laudable if its motive had not been criminal. He had the character of being the most masterful and unscrupulous man of his day; but few, as yet, suspected the consuming ambition which underlay his nature. In leading this conspiracy he posed as the friend and lover of his country. The bond declared that the object of the subscribers was to rid the kingdom of "ane young fool and proud tirrane." But Bothwell's private object was of a different kind. In imagination he already saw himself the husband of Mary Stuart, and King of Scotland.

He had arrived at an age when a man's character is formed either for good or ill. He was now thirty-one years old. What he was like we cannot tell, for not a single authentic portrait of him is known to exist in Scotland. None of the politicians of his time, however, are better known to us by reputation.

His whole previous career had been a romance—in some respects even a romance of crime. No *parvenu*, as many have described him, but the fourth Earl of his name, his early education had been principally received from his granduncle, Patrick Hepburn, Bishop of Moray, who had taken him to his baronial castle on the shores of the Loch of Spynie, near Elgin, and there given him a training which was ill adapted to make him either a good man or a useful citizen. The Bishop was one of those courtly and cultured prelates whose sole ideas are centered on the acquisition of lands, riches, and worldly

influence. Whatever else he may have learned, Bothwell certainly learned from him to perfection the art of taking care of himself. His father, who was Lord High Admiral of Scotland, died when he was nineteen, and his son succeeded him not only in his estates and titles, but in his offices. From this date his active career begins.

Appointed a Lieutenant-General of the Marches and keeper of Hermitage Castle in Liddesdale, it would have been well if he had allowed his youthful ardour to find vent in restraining the masterful rievers who then as ever kept the Borders in a state of chronic warfare. But it was not long before he began to show himself as unruly and turbulent a subject as the rough customers whom it was his duty to repress. One street brawl was followed by another, till at last the Earl of Moray, who was then Regent, and who ever showed himself his inveterate enemy, was forced to interfere, and Bothwell found himself a prisoner in the Castle of Edinburgh. The keeper of the Castle was his friend Sir James Balfour, and from it he soon managed to escape, by breaking one of the iron bars, and letting himself down by a rope over the Castle rock during the night. He fled to Hermitage, and was about to fortify it, but changing his mind, he embarked one winter morning at North Berwick, probably with the intention of taking refuge in Denmark, a country he had visited two years before. But his ship having been driven ashore on Holy Island, he was captured by Elizabeth's officers, and by her orders detained in Tynemouth prison for more than a year. At length Mary, whose champion he had ever consistently been, interposed in his favour. Bothwell obtained his release, and, betaking himself to France, was made a captain of the celebrated

Scottish Guard. In 1565 he returned home, but he did not remain long. Finding himself still pursued by the enmity of Moray, he escaped again to the Continent, from which he did not return till Moray was himself an exile. Then he was recalled by Mary; his estates and honours were restored to him, and he was made Warden of the Marches.

Had this been all his record, it might, for a young Scottish noble of those days, be considered not so very far amiss. Unfortunately Bothwell's amours had been more notorious and reprehensible, not to say more numerous, than his "rebellions" and his quarrels. And they had got him into far greater scrapes—scrapes, indeed, which public opinion, lax enough in all conscience in those days, could not tolerate even from one who called himself a Protestant, and who had sat at the feet of John Knox himself. There can be no doubt, we fear, either of Bothwell's degrading vices or of his abominable heartlessness. The poor Norwegian girl, Anne Throndssön, whom he "had taken away from her fatherland and paternal home, and led into a foreign land away from her parents, and would not hold as his lawful wife," though "with hand and mouth and letters he had promised both her and her parents that he would do so," was but one out of a score of similar victims. But these disreputable incidents of his career are better left unnarrated.

Such was Bothwell—a man who was born to be Mary Stuart's evil genius.

It is difficult at first to understand how Mary should have so readily accorded her confidence and her favour —whether she ever accorded her love may well be doubted—to one whom she knew to be a heartless

libertine and unprincipled self-seeker, rough in his manner, innocent of the slightest tincture of right feeling, a brawler, a braggart, and, morally at least, a coward. The explanation is possibly to be found in the fascination that a powerful will always exercises over a weak one. Mary's nature was not strong. There were strong points in it no doubt, as indeed there are in all natures not absolutely colourless. But Mary was a woman all over—an almost typical woman—with all a woman's weakness, and all a woman's helplessness, all a woman's inclination to rely on some man whom she could trust, and who might rule her and her kingdom too if he pleased, so long as he left her free to fascinate and to charm. And in Bothwell she found one who in many respects seemed to be the person she wanted. He was not her ideal, perhaps. She would have liked a little less roughness, a little more polish and gentleness alike of manners and conduct. But the strength was all there, the loyalty was all there, the disposition to serve, to please, to save her trouble and annoyance in everything—affairs of domestic life as well as affairs of State—was all there also. Before she knew what she had done she had become as wax in his hands. It was a fatal complacency, which she did not discover, alas! until it was too late.

Whether or not the Queen was either an active or a passive participant in the murder of her husband is a problem which has never yet been, and probably never will be, solved.

But if innocent, she was to suffer for it in the future, just as if she had been guilty.

II.

SUNDAY in the time of Mary Stuart was the blithest and merriest day of the seven. The gloomy Sabbath of the Covenanters was not yet invented; and the ordinary Sunday of the age was much like what a Continental Sunday now is—a day when men rested from their secular labours, but did not think it wrong to indulge their natural inclinations towards innocent enjoyment. Hence the first day of the week was a great day for social festivities, especially for such as were sanctioned by the Church. Weddings and christenings were almost invariably celebrated on that day. Mary herself, it may be remembered, had been wedded to Darnley on a Sunday. And on the morning of Sunday, the 9th February 1567, a wedding was in progress, at which not only had Mary promised to be present, but in which she took a very lively interest. For the happy man was one of her oldest servants—one who had accompanied her from France, a certain Sebastien Pagez, and native of Clermont—and the bride was a young Scottish girl, one Christily Hogg—not Margaret Carwood, one of the Queen's ladies, as is generally stated—of whom we unfortunately know nothing more than the name.

Bastien was a great favourite of the Queen. He was a witty, waggish kind of fellow, inimitable at devising a masque or managing a ball, and at what was even more important—amusing Mary in her now not infrequent days of depression and ennui. Sometimes, indeed, his drollery led him to overstep the bounds of discretion. There was a desperate diplomatic rumpus

excited not many months before, for instance, at the masked ball given by Mary at Stirling to celebrate the baptism of James VI., when Bastien and a band of rollicking companions dressed as satyrs entered and audaciously wagged their long tails in the faces of the English ambassador and his suite. But as no insult was intended, of course, the matter was allowed to drop without any more serious consequences emerging from it than a little momentary irritation, and a great waste of official paper and ink.

The programme that Mary had arranged for her day was a pretty full one. First there was the wedding in the morning. Then there was a dinner at the Bishop of Argyll's in honour of the Piedmontese Ambassador Moretta, who was leaving Scotland; after that she had her daily visit to pay to her husband at the Kirk-of-Field; lastly, in the evening there was a great dance and masque at Holyrood, given by her as a special mark of favour to Bastien and his bride.

The wedding went off very well, so did the banquet,—so well indeed that it was late in the afternoon and quite dark before the Queen arrived at Kirk-of-Field. When she did arrive, in company with Lords Huntly, Argyll, and Cassilis, it was noted that Mary was in the highest spirits.

Ever since Darnley had taken up his quarters at the old prebend house, the Queen's attention and kindness to him had been unremitting. It seemed as if all the clouds of suspicion and distrust that had existed between them had rolled away, and that a bright future was in store for them both. Mary had had the small bedroom on the ground floor beneath that of her husband fitted up for her own use; and twice a week—

on Wednesdays and Fridays—she was in the habit of passing the night in it so as to be near him. All that she could do, too, to lighten the tedium of his convalescence she did. She would sit for hours in his sick-room chatting, gossipping, or playing at cards with him. Sometimes she would bring her private band of musicians from Holyrood to play to him, and the only indulgence she ever permitted herself when thus on duty at his bedside was a hasty walk with one or other of her ladies amid the leafless trees and snow-covered paths of the adjoining garden of the Dominican Monastery.

These winter evenings at Kirk-of-Field seem to have been very cheery gatherings. There was an absence of anything like state or ceremony about them. The guests were few in number and almost always the same set. Bothwell, who might now be called the Indispensable, was always there, watching his victim, calculating with fiendish malignity first the weeks, then the days, then the hours, that he had to live.

At first it had been intended to kill the King out of doors, when he was walking in the neighbouring gardens. But this idea was given up, as the murder, it was thought, would be more easily found out. When it was finally decided to blow him up, Bothwell himself arranged for the supply of gunpowder. It was brought from Dunbar Castle, the arsenal of the kingdom, of which he was keeper, and lodged in his own rooms at Holyrood till the time came when it should be required.

Saturday, the 8th February, was the day originally fixed for the King's murder, but as everything was not ready, it was postponed till the following day.

A curious incident which happened that very night

nearly foiled the whole conspiracy. The previous day Mary, who, as it was Friday, was spending the night at Kirk-of-Field, was told by her husband that, under the seal of the strictest secrecy, he had been warned by Robert Stuart, Prior of Holyroodhouse, her half-brother, that unless he left his present lodgings at once danger of a very deadly nature was certain to befall him. Mary at once sat down and wrote to her brother about it. Stuart denied it, and the next night, when he and Darnley met in the latter's room, a sharp altercation ensued between them, so sharp indeed that, notwithstanding the Queen's presence, each laid his hand on his sword. No doubt Bothwell set the King's fears at rest. From first to last of this horrid business there is not the slightest evidence to show that Darnley had the slightest suspicion of the man who was the fount and origin of the whole dastardly conspiracy.

What seems to us incomprehensible, after all the thought and consideration that we know were expended on the business, is, that on the morning of the very day on which the murder was to take place, the preparations for it were very far from being complete. The plot and the plotters were there sure enough, but the hands by whom the plot was to be carried out, the victims who were to be sacrificed to the ambition of the plotters,—for that was what it came to,—were still to be found. Certain men, indeed, whose idea of feudal obligation was as strong as that of poor Dougal, who was "ready to droun hersel ta please ta Laird," had indeed promised to stand by Bothwell in carrying out the object of the conspiracy; but their *rôles* were yet unallotted, their parts were yet unrehearsed.

These poor deluded men were eight in number.

Four of them, the Laird of Ormiston, his uncle, old Hob Ormiston, young John Hay of Talla, and John Hepburn of Bolton, belonged to the class of smaller landed gentry, and were feudally vassals of Bothwell, —bound to do him suit and service. Three of the others—William Powrie, Patrick Wilson, and George Dalgleish — were his servants. The other, Nicolas Hubert, commonly known by the nickname of French Paris, was a creature of his own, who had been at one time in his service, but whom, no doubt for reasons best known to himself, he had persuaded the Queen to take into her employment. Not one of these men, when the matter was first mentioned to them, dared to say him nay; or if they did, their objections were promptly overcome, more we cannot doubt by the masterful Earl's threats than by his persuasions. Bothwell's three servants were kept in absolute ignorance of the nature of the enterprise they were engaged in to the last. "As God shall be my judge," said George Dalgleish, his chamber servant, a young lad of twenty-seven, before his execution, "I knew nothing of the King's death befoir it was done."

Bothwell had been at the Bishop of Argyll's dinner party and had left it with the Queen. But instead of accompanying her to the Kirk-of-Field, he went back to his rooms at Holyrood, where he had appointed Hepburn and Hay to meet him. The trio sat about two hours in consultation; and then, about six, they started off on foot to see the Laird of Ormiston, who lived in the Black Friars' Wynd. They found his uncle Hob with him. Hob knew nothing of the business, and accordingly the first thing they had to do was to obtain his co-operation. Then they fell to discussing how

and by what road the powder should be conveyed to the prebend house. When at length, after a protracted consultation, they had made up their minds, they sent for Powrie and Wilson, and ordered them to go to the Abbey and bring up a trunk and a leathern valise that they would find in the nether hall of the Earl's apartments. As the contents were heavy, they were to take the grey horse that Hermann, Bothwell's page, was accustomed to ride, and bring the trunks on it to the gate of the Black Friars' Monastery, and they were to be sure not to come through the Canongate, but by the road underneath the city wall, outside the town altogether. This was about ten o'clock.

The two men accordingly started.

They found Hepburn, young Hay of Talla, and the Laird of Ormiston waiting for them when they returned. But they had only half their burden with them. They had found the packages so weighty that they could not be taken together. Accordingly they were sent back for the one they had left behind, and ordered at the same time to bring along with them an empty powder barrel which was also lying in the nether hall.

By this time the men were getting suspicious as to the nature of the job on which they were engaged.

"Jesu, Pat," said Powrie to his "marrow," as they came past the foot of the Friars' Wynd on their second journey, "whatna gait is this we're gangin'? I trow it's no good."

Wilson shook his head.

"I trow it's not," he said, "but whisht! haud your tongue!"

Hepburn and Ormiston received them at the gate of the monastery as before. As for young Talla, they saw

him walking up and down the adjoining Cowgate in company with Bothwell.

As soon as the gate, which was locked, was opened—which was done by one of the party entering through the ruins of the monastery and unlocking it from the inside—the whole of the men passed into the monastery gardens.

It was mirk night by this time, and all the light the conspirators had with them was "ane littil licht candell." As it was not enough, John Hepburn sent Powrie to buy more. He returned with six halfpenny candles which "he coft from Geordie Burns' wife in the Cowgate, and deliverit to the said Johne." Then the "maills" were opened, and the powder, which was found packed in bags, taken out. Every man shouldered a bag and carried it through the garden to the back wall of the quadrangle, inside which, as we have already said, the house where the King lodged was situated.

Powrie and Wilson were then sent home. On reaching the monastery gate they found their horse gone. There was nothing for it but to carry the trunk and the valise back to the Abbey themselves, which accordingly they proceeded to do. As they were passing through the Black Friars' Wynd they came upon the Queen, who, with men carrying lighted torches before her, was riding home to Holyrood. Little though she then surmised it, the Queen had seen her husband alive for the last time.

As soon as the two men had been got rid of, the rest of the conspirators placed the powder in the barrel they had sent for, and carried it to the back door of the King's lodging. It was opened to them by French Paris. The barrel was too large to get in at the door,

so it was taken back into the yard and the bags of powder lifted out of it. The powder was then conveyed into the little bedroom on the ground storey, which the Queen was accustomed to occupy, and emptied out of the "pocks" into a heap on the floor.

While Hepburn and his associates were thus engaged, Bothwell, who had left the party as they were taking the bags of powder out of the trunks at the Black Friars' gate, entered the room.

He seemed somewhat anxious.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "what a noise you are making! Everything you are doing is being heard in the King's room upstairs. Be quick and finish what you are about. If the Queen were to come in while you are thus engaged there would be a pretty business."

Then turning to Paris he told him he was going back to Darnley's room, and bade him follow him there when everything was completed. Then he left the room. A few minutes more and the work was done. Ormiston, his uncle Hob, and French Paris then went away. Hepburn and Hay, however, remained within to prepare the train, the others locking the door upon them when they departed.

It was a little past eleven o'clock when Paris entered the King's apartment. Bothwell was in conversation with Argyll, and Paris relates how when he came in Argyll went up to him and touched him on the back without saying a word. As for Bothwell, he did not even let his eyes light upon him. Some others of the company were playing with dice. As for Mary, she was sitting beside her husband, talking affectionately to him.

A few minutes later—"about the space of a paternoster," says one of the witnesses—the Queen rose to take leave of Darnley. She had promised, she ex-

plained, to be present at Sebastien's masque and to assist at the ceremony of "putting the bride to bed," and so could not remain with him that night as she had intended, and indeed had promised. She kissed the King more than once as she bade him goodnight, and, to make up for not keeping her promise, presented him with a ring—a rather unusual token of her affection.

As soon as she had left the room Darnley turned to his servants and remarked with satisfaction on the Queen's kindness. All discord, he observed, was now at an end between them. They were fast friends and loving spouses once more. Only once during the evening, he said, had a jarring note occurred in the course of their conversation, and that was when Mary had remarked that it was about this time last year that David Rizzio had been slain. But it was nothing, and he was not going to let a memory like that trouble his new-found joy,

All this time his servants were helping him to undress.

Before finally composing himself to rest, Darnley read or had read to him the fifty-fifth psalm. Then he lay down in his bed—not the new black velvet one that had been set up in the room at first, but an old purple one, "that was accustomat to be carit"—the other having been removed by the Queen's orders as it was being injured by Darnley's bath—William Taylor, his cubicular, who occupied the same room, came and lay down on his pallet, and the other servants whom he had with him in the house, Thomas Nelson, Edward Symonds, Andrew Mackay, and William Taylor's "boy," who was called Glen, retired to their beds in the "little gallery."

This was shortly after midnight.

III.

BOTHWELL accompanied the Queen to Holyrood, but if he attended the masque, it was only to put in an appearance.

About the same time that Darnley was stepping into bed, the Earl retired to his apartments in the Abbey, and changed his rich doublet of black satin and his hose, "stocket with black welvet, passamentit with silver," for a white canvas doublet and a pair of ordinary black velvet hose. Then he flung his side riding-cloak about him, "which was of sad English claith, callit the new colour," seized his sword, and "incontinent" left the room. George Dalgleish, who seems to have assisted him at his toilet, attended him. He was immediately joined by French Paris, to whom he spoke a few words. Then, catching sight of Powrie, his porter, and Pat Wilson—the two men who had carried the powder to the monastery—he bade them come with him, and Dalgleish also. The five men descended the turnpike or spiral staircase which led from the Earl's rooms to the courtyard below together; then they stole along the back of the Queen's garden, past the cunziehouse or mint and the back of the stables, till they came to the Canongate, opposite the Abbey gate. As they passed the entrance to the Queen's south garden they were challenged by one of the sentinels and asked who they were.

"Friends!" they answered.

"What friends?" inquired the man.

"Friends to my Lord Bothwell."

They were allowed to proceed.

Advancing up the Canongate they came at length to the Nether Bow, which was locked. Wilson called to John Galloway, the porter, to get up and let them through. But the old man kept them waiting a good while, and when at last he made his appearance he grumblingly asked them "What they were doing out of their beds at that time of night?" Never heeding him, they held on their way till they came to Black Friars' Wynd, where they stopped at Ormiston's house and inquired if he was at home. Being answered in the negative, they slipped down a close at the back of the Wynd, and at length found themselves in the Cowgate, not far from the Black Friars' gate.

Passing through it, they proceeded to the back wall of the quadrangle—the place where Powrie and Wilson had been stopped before; and here the Earl stopped them again. Telling them and George Dalgleish to wait till he came back, he and French Paris passed "in ower the dyke."

We must leave them here, shivering in the cold winter night—or rather morning, for it was close upon two o'clock—all the more to be commiserated that, though they suspected something, they were ignorant of the exact nature of the deed of devilry in which they were unwilling participants, and accompany Bothwell and his attendant to the house where the luckless King was now lying fast asleep in bed.

As soon as they had arrived, Bothwell sent in Paris to notify his arrival to Hepburn and Hay, who were enclosed in the room with the powder. By this time all their arrangements for firing the house were completed. On a little wooden trough, one end of which lay on the powder, they had rested a slow match. This they now

ignited. Then, locking all doors behind them—they had false keys made for every door in the house—they came out to the yard, where they found Bothwell eagerly awaiting their coming.

"Was everything ready?" asked the Earl.

They replied in the affirmative.

"And done?"

"Yes!" they answered.

Restless and anxious, Bothwell paced up and down the courtyard waiting to see the consummation of his villainy, while the rest of the party, clustering round the door, listened breathlessly for the first indications of the firing of the train. Five minutes, ten minutes, then a quarter of an hour elapsed, and still all remained quiet and still. Bothwell's uneasiness increased. Had the match failed?

At last, unable to brook his impatience any longer, he approached the door and angrily demanded the key. He would go in and ascertain for himself the cause of this annoying delay.

John Hepburn held him back.

"Ye need not," he said, pulling him away from the building.

"I won't go," said Bothwell, shaking his cousin off, "till I see it done!"

Hepburn, however, insisted that he should remove further off from the source of danger, and after much persuasion, he was induced to rejoin Paris and the other servants on the other side of the wall.

Almost immediately after a loud explosion ensued.

Taking to their heels, the murderers fled through the monastery grounds and out at the monastery gate; nor did they stop till they found themselves in the Cow-

gate. Then they "sundered." What road Hay took is uncertain; but the Earl, Hepburn, Wilson, Powrie, and Dalgleish went up a wynd to the east of the Black Friars' Wynd, and so reached the High Street. Their intention apparently was to have got into the Canongate by leaping the wall at Leith's Wynd. But Bothwell, who was still suffering from the effects of a wound got in the course of one of his raids on the Border freebooters, found the wall too high, and they had to retrace their steps to the Nether Bow Port. Again the surly old porter, John Galloway, had to be wakened out of his bed, and again they had to say who they were before he let them through. Once through, instead of returning to the Abbey by the Canongate, they turned down St. Mary's Wynd, and, skirting the city walls, reached Holyrood by a way, we may assume, they never would have taken had their midnight ramble been of a more legitimate character. When they came to the Queen's south garden they were again challenged by the sentinel. But they satisfied him with the old and all-powerful excuse —"they were friends of my Lord Bothwell."

Once safe within his rooms, Bothwell called for a drink, then hastily taking off his clothes, he turned into bed. Half-an-hour afterwards George Hacket, fresh from the conflagration and "black as any pik," rushed into his room haggard and terrified, and scarcely able to speak.

"For God's sake, my Lord, wake up!" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter, man?" asked Bothwell, pretending to wake out of sleep.

"The King's house they say is blown up," stammered out the affrighted messenger, "and I trow the King's Grace be slain."

"Treason!" cried the Earl leaping from his bed.

"And incontinent," says George Dalgleish, his chamber-servant, in his confession, "my Lord raise and put on his claythe,—that is to say, the same hose and doublet he had on upon Sunday, quhilks wer pessament with silver; and so sone as my lordis claythe was on, he departed furth of the chalmer."

In company with Huntly and others of the Lords resident in the Abbey, he went straight to the Queen's rooms and broke the fearful news to her. Then, leaping on horseback, he started off with a company of soldiers to the Kirk-of-Field, nominally to make a judicial investigation into the circumstances in his capacity of Sheriff of Edinburgh, really to gorge on his own fiendish handiwork.

And what a sight met his eyes!

The house lay in ruins. It had fallen flat on the ground like a child's house of cards.

Making his way through the dense crowd which surrounded it, he at once gave orders to look for the King. To his astonishment the body was not to be found among the *débris*. So terrific had been the force of the explosion that it had been carried "through the air" across the Thief Row, across the wall and into the garden adjoining, where it was found lying on its back under a tree. Close by him on its face lay the body of William Taylor, the King's "cubicular." Both were in their night-dresses. The rest of Darnley's clothes, and also his boots, were discovered lying by his side.

Not a bruise was to be seen on either of their bodies, and there were no marks of fire. Not a hair of their heads was singed. To those who did not know the power of gunpowder, the thing looked supernatural; nor

can we wonder that there were those who, looking at the King's white unblemished face—the handsomest face in Scotland, some people thought, in its day—spoke darkly of some other even more cowardly means of assassination having been employed than that which we now know for certain was the real one.

As for the three other persons who were in the house at the time, they were buried in its ruins. Nelson alone had the good fortune to be taken up alive. But he could give no account of what had happened. "Never knew he of onything," he said, "till the house wherein they lay was falling about them: out of the quhilke, how sone as he could be red [extricated] from the ruins, he stood upon the ruinous wall till the people convenit, then gat he claithis and so departit."

Never was fouler deed perpetrated in Scotland, nor one which more loudly called for swift and summary punishment.

No one doubted who its perpetrators were. Midnight voices were heard denouncing Bothwell as the King's murderer, some even "drawing his pourtrait to the life;" papers were found strewn about the streets naming him as the head of the conspiracy; placards posted up—none knew when or by whom—called aloud for vengeance on the traitor who had felonly done his King to death. Bothwell had all along assumed that Darnley's assassination, far from provoking any outburst of popular feeling, would have been accepted as a national benefit. To his astonishment he now found himself mistaken. Suspected, abhorred, and distrusted, he began to fear that his own life was in danger. It was noted that he never entered into conversation with strangers without laying his hand on his sword.

But his influence was still irresistible, and in the end it prevailed.

Very soon he found himself strong enough to submit to that process of whitewashing by which in those days, when might alone was right, a powerful noble could set even the laws of his country at defiance. He demanded a trial, he overawed the Court, the Crown officials, and the populace, and he was acquitted. This was the first scene of the farce. Then he called together his principal supporters among the nobility, and at a great supper at Ainslie's Tavern, forced them not only to declare their faith in his innocence, but to recommend him to the Queen as a fitting candidate for her hand. This was the second scene of the farce. And on the 15th May 1567, little more than three months after Darnley's death, he compelled Mary Stuart to marry him, to the infinite and abiding skaith both of herself and of her kingdom. The farce had become a tragedy.

THE TRAGEDY OF GOWRIE.

J. Skinner & Co.

OLD GOWRIE HOUSE, PERTH.

The Tragedy of Gowrie.

I.

It was between six and seven o'clock on the morning of Tuesday, the 5th August 1600.

Early though it was, all Falkland was astir. James VI., though a craven in most things, was a true Stuart in his devotion to the chase, and since his arrival at the Palace scarcely a day had elapsed without his indulging in his favourite pastime. To day the weather was exceptionally fine—"wonderful pleasant and seasonable"—and everything promised a glorious run, and justified an early departure.

The stables and kennels, where the meet had been appointed to take place, were at some little distance from the house, and by the time the King had ridden over, everything was in readiness for the start. His courtiers, clad, like himself, in green, with hunting horns slung across their shoulders, were standing beside their horses ready for the "onleaping." The impatient hounds were whimpering in the leash. The huntsmen, cap in hand, only awaited the King's signal to start them to their work.

The King on his arrival had dismounted to say a word to some of his retinue. He was just on the point of regaining his saddle, when he noticed a young man

advancing hastily towards him. He recognised him at once. It was Alexander, Master of Ruthven, younger brother of the Earl of Gowrie. James knew him well. One, if not two, of his sisters were in the Queen's service as maids of honour. As for Alexander himself, he had been often at Court, and there were not wanting gossipping tongues which insinuated that this handsome youth of twenty was in high favour—higher, they did not hesitate to whisper, than he ought to be—with the Queen.

There was not a word of truth in the story, of course. But after the events which we are now about to relate, the silly slander, by this time grown circumstantial in the matter of details, was industriously propagated; and in the end it got into print, and has actually been repeated by some who no doubt regard themselves as responsible historians.

On coming up to the King, Alexander bowed low, and begged the King to step aside with him for a moment, as he had something of consequence to say to him.

Reflecting on this part of the business, after the whole affair was over, the King remembered—or shall we say imagined—that he had observed that Alexander's demeanour on accosting him was very different to what it generally was. First of all, his bow was much lower than he was wont to make; then his countenance, instead of being bright and sunny as ordinarily, was extremely dejected; and when he spoke "his eies were ever fixed upon the earth." But the King, amongst his other weaknesses, was very proud of his powers of observation, and at the time when he recollected all these details he had not got over his fright. So the reader may believe them or not, just as he likes.

James, who dearly loved a secret—though he never

could keep one—readily assented to Alexander's request; and when they had "removed them a little space out of hearing" of the company Alexander opened to the King "that which he had to say." And a very strange story it was—a story one would have thought that could have deceived no one except the Scottish Solomon. Persons of the King's peculiar style of wisdom are like detectives in story-books; they are so constantly on the look-out for something or other that they jump at any fly. Always on the alert to catch others, they never imagine that they can ever be caught themselves; consequently, the clumsiest bait will oftentimes deceive them.

But it cannot be denied that in the present case the lure was cleverly fashioned indeed. It appealed to so many of the King's weaknesses, especially those which he did not know, or at any rate would not admit that he possessed. His avarice, his love of mystery, his religious prejudices, all were interested. None but a disciple of Machiavel—and we know of only one in Scotland at that time, Alexander's eldest brother, the Earl of Gowrie himself—could possibly have conceived it.

Alexander's story was this. The evening before, he had gone out for a solitary walk in the neighbourhood of St. Johnston, as the town of Perth was then called, when he had come suddenly upon a person of very suspicious appearance—"a base-looking fellow,"—with the lower part of his face muffled in his cloak. He asked him who he was, and what he was after in such a lonely place. But his answers, as well as his manner, were so unsatisfactory that he "began more narrowly to look upon him," and noticing that there was something hid under his cloak, he flung aside the lappet of

it, and there under his arm he discovered, to his immense astonishment, a great wide pot full of golden coin!

Here was a find!

Alexander lost no time in securing both the man and his hoard. He took back the fellow with his burden to the town, and locked him into a "privy concealed house," and there he was, awaiting His Majesty's orders.

But James protested he had no orders to give. With characteristic pedantry he proceeded to inform Ruthven that except as to treasure-trove—treasure found under the earth—he, as King, had no claim upon any man's findings.

"But," said Alexander, not expecting such an answer, "the fellow confessed to me that he was just going to hide it under the ground when he was caught."

"There was great difference," James sagaciously replied, "betwixt a deed and the intention of a deed."

Alexander rejoined that, with all due respect, he thought His Majesty was over scrupulous. If the King did not take possession of it, his brother, the Earl of Gowrie, or some other great men would; and this might "make His Majestie the more adoe."

The King's palms were beginning to itch. Appreciating the force of Alexander's argument, he now began to cast about in his mind for some good excuse to get the "pose," as he called it, into his own royal and greedy hands. Perhaps it was Jesuit gold, he bethought him, sent over by wicked Papists to stir up some new sedition in Scotland, as had so often been done before. If it were, would it not be proper, would it not be his duty, to take possession of it in the interests of his country? He did not like to say so much to Alexander, who, after

all, was a mere boy, and not sufficiently exercised in such high affairs of State. But being a very wise and prudent monarch—none better, indeed, for seeing through a stone wall—James thought he would ask a few further questions before he committed himself to a decision.

So he inquired what kind of coin it was, and what sort of a man it was who carried it.

"So far as I could see," Alexander made answer, "the coins were of foreign minting; and as for the fellow, I took him from his dress and his language to be a Scotsman, but I had never seen him before."

"Ah!" thought James, delighted at his own perspicuity, "evidently some seminary priest disguised! Doubtless," he added, addressing himself to Ruthven, "the matter was of importance, and I shall consider what were best to be done." Meantime he would send back a servant of his own with "Maister Alexander," with a warrant to the Provost and Bailies of St. Johnston to arrest both the man and the money, and, after the fellow had been examined, he would—he would give further orders. "Wherat the said Maister Alexander stirred marvellously; affirming and protesting that if either the lorde, his brother (who was then Provost), or the bailliffes of the town were put on the counsail thereof, His Majestie would get a very badde count made to him of that treasure, swearing that the great love and affection hee bare unto His Majestie had made him to preferre His Majestie in this case, both unto himself and his brother, for the which service he humbly craved that recompense, that His Majestie would take the paynes at once to ride thither, that he might be the first seer thereof himself, which being

done, he would remit to His Majestie's owne honourable discretion how far it would please His Majestie to consider upon him for that service."

James (for this quotation is made from the account which was afterwards published by his authority, we are told—or rather he tells us himself) was "stricken in great admiration, both of the unworthiness of the tale, and of the strange and stupide behaviour of the reporter"—in other words, he could not exactly make up his mind what to do.

But at this moment fortune interposed in the shape of a *deus ex machinâ*. A blast from the huntsmen's horns announced that the game was already found.

Telling Ruthven that he could not stay any longer from his sport, but that he would "consider of the matter" and give him "a resolute answer" at the end of the chase, James struck his spurs into his horse's flanks and dashed off after his hounds, which were now in full cry. Alexander was very angry, and made some sort of a saucy reply. But there was no help for it. The King was off, and he was left standing, sulky and solitary, in the midst of the green in front of the stables.

He did not exactly know what to do with himself. He was bound to wait till the King's sport was over, but how long it might last, or how to spend the interval, were problems which he had some difficulty in solving. He was annoyed at the waste of time, for he had a shrewd idea that the King's indecision would be resolved by James complying with his request; and if so, why could not he have come at once? Meantime, he determined to send a messenger to his brother, the Earl, to let him know how he had fared in his mission.

He had brought two men with him—Andrew Henderson, his brother's chamberlain, and Andrew Ruthven. The former of these he now called up, and ordered him to ride with all haste to St. Johnston, and let his brother know that he hoped to move His Majesty to come thither, adding that the Earl need not look for them for three hours to come. He further requested that dinner might be prepared for them.

The messenger had hardly gone, when John Naismith, the King's surgeon, came riding up to where the Master of Ruthven was standing, with a message from the King, that Alexander should attend him at once. He obeyed the summons with alacrity.

When he came up to the King, James informed him that he had been turning the matter over in his mind, and perceiving Alexander's earnestness, he had determined to accede to his entreaty. At the conclusion of the hunt, he said he would ride with him to St. Johnston, and examine the affair in person. It was evident from the King's manner that he was much gratified by the young man's devotion to his interests. He put his arm on Alexander's shoulder with his wonted undignified familiarity, and spoke very kindly to him.

Having said this, the King started off again. Alexander and John Hamilton of Grange, one of the King's master stablers, followed him, the rest of the Court being all before in the chase. But throughout the whole progress of the hunt, which lasted till past eleven o'clock, "being one of the greatest and sorest that ever His Majestie was at," James could not help being struck by Alexander's behaviour.

He was ever at his back. Whenever there was any stop in the chase, even the smallest delay, he approached

him, and whispering in his ear, entreated him to hasten the end of the hunting. And his manner was so odd, too. His uncouth staring, his downcast countenance, his persistence, his fidgety restlessness, all betokened an agitation for which the King was at a loss to find an explanation.

But James suspected nothing,—at least not yet. Possessed of one of those curiously contradictory natures, so indicative of shallow and weak-willed men, he was at once crafty and credulous. And with characteristic self-esteem he prided himself on both these qualities. The one he looked upon as evidence of preternatural sagacity, the other as betokening a frank and disingenuous disposition. They were royal virtues both!

Before the chase was over, James' excitement had grown as great as Alexander's. He did not wait for the cutting up of the carcase, as was his wont. But remounting the same horse which he had ridden all morning, and without staying to buckle on his sword, he started off with the Master, ordering a fresh horse to be sent after him, and telling the Duke of Lennox, and the Earl of Mar, and some others of his Court who were standing beside him, that he was going to Perth to speak to Lord Gowrie, and that he would be back before even.

It was during the ten miles ride from Falkland to St. Johnston that the first suspicion of Alexander Ruthven's loyalty crossed the King's mind.

Noticing that Lennox and Mar and other gentlemen of his train, having provided themselves with fresh horses, were following close at their heels, Alexander suggested that such an escort was unnecessary, and recommended the King to order them back, and take only three or four servants with him. James half

angrily refused, and to show his displeasure slackened his pace, and waited for Lennox to come up to him. Taking the hint, Alexander fell behind and joined the main body of the party, while the King, drawing his horse alongside that of the Duke, began what was evidently intended to be a private conversation with Lennox.

"Ye'll never guess, man," he said, with a grotesque grimace, reminding one of a good-humoured ogre, "what an errand I'm on! I'm going," he added, with a chuckle, "to get a pose from Maister Alexander;" and then he proceeded to tell Lennox the whole story."

"I like not that, sir," said the Duke when he had finished; "it's an unlikely story."

The King said nothing. The same idea was beginning to cross his mind. But he was now committed to the business, and, unlikely though it was, more unlikely things had happened. And if the tale were true, what a triumph it would be! How he would applaud his own judgment and discrimination in the matter! How he would crow over the incredulity of Lennox!

"What sort of a man," he asked the Duke after a pause, "think you the Maister to be?"

Lennox cautiously answered that he had always regarded him as an honest, discreet gentleman.

"Ye've never seen onything to make you think he's off his head, mon?"

"Nothing," was the reply.

"He told me to keep the thing secret," said the King, as if thinking aloud, "this matter of the pose; and he wasna for my taking onybody with me; but," he added, as another gust of suspicion swept across his irresolute mind, "tak ye tent, my Lord, when

I pass in wi' Maister Alexander, that ye're no far ahint me."

During the whole of this conversation Alexander had kept discreetly in the background. But he now came again to the front in a somewhat extraordinary manner; for, as soon as the party came within a mile from Perth, the Master dug his spurs into his horse's side, and without so much as a passing salutation to the King, started off at a gallop in the direction of the town. What his object was, was speedily made manifest; for when the King with his cavalcade arrived at the North Inch, he was met by the Earl of Gowrie, "accompanied with divers persons, all on foot"—Alexander amongst them—who, with polite salutations and every sign of the profoundest respect, conducted the King and his little band of courtiers to Gowrie House.

II.

JOHN, third Earl of Gowrie, was a lad of eight years of age, when in 1584 old "Grey Steel" his father, the first Earl, was executed for his share in the bold and treasonable enterprise known as the Raid of Ruthven, which, for a short period, placed the King, and with him the disposal of the whole patronage and power of the kingdom, in the hands of a small but very powerful faction.

Though the King had reversed the attainder of his father, and restored the earldom to the family, he had never forgotten—nor, we may be sure, forgiven—the crime for which it had been taken away. While he assiduously strove to keep on friendly terms with the Ruthvens, he never felt entirely sure of their loyalty or devotion. Deep at the bottom of his heart, carefully hidden out of sight, there lay a thick deposit of suspicion and distrust. Nor can we wonder at it. James might have got over the audacity of the crime —for it was not the first time that a Prince of Scotland had been taken captive by a selfish and ambitious faction; but he could never pardon the outrage upon his boyish feelings. "Better bairns greet than bearded men"—the words which the Master of Glamis, who was one of the conspirators, had addressed to the weeping child when he found himself a prisoner—was an indignity which, in the eyes of one who had such an exalted idea of the divine right of kings, could never be pardoned.

And there were other reasons. Could he forget the part that Patrick Ruthven, the present Earl's grand-

father, had played at the murder of David Rizzio? He could not remember it, of course; but the scene had been often described to him. That grim, ghastly, corpse-like figure, clad in complete armour, stalking with his traitorous accomplices behind him into the dimly-lighted oak-panelled room, where his mother sat with her ladies listening to the gossip and songs of the Italian musician seated on a low stool at her feet, the fierce language of the conspirators, the clash of arms, the shrieks of the Queen and her maidens, the despairing cries of the terror-stricken victim—he knew the whole story off by heart.

These Ruthvens had always been men of mystery, diablerie, and maleficent energy generally. They were an uncanny race, more than shrewdly suspected of knowledge which was neither good to know nor good to make use of. Not to speak of the magic ring that Earl John's grandfather had given to Mary to keep her from poisoning, was it not a notorious fact that his father, the first Earl, had on more than one occasion consulted with wizards touching the state of things in future times?

But in knowledge of the necromantic art none of the Ruthvens could hold a candle to Earl John. Young though he was, he was a past master in all the branches of forbidden knowledge. The five years that he had spent at the University of Padua had not been wasted. He had returned to Scotland in 1599, not only a ripe scholar in those studies whose acquisition was honourable and commendable, but a devoted student of judicial astrology, a believer in the great *Arcanum*, an enthusiastic chemist, an ardent searcher into every one of the numerous departments of occult science. He did

not parade his knowledge of these things ; but that only made him the more dangerous. The fact—and it was well known—that he was addicted to these pursuits was sufficient to invest him with a mysterious glamour, which made him an object of terror to high and low, to learned and unlearned alike. The brilliant scholastic reputation which he had enjoyed abroad, and which had shone around him like a glory, had, now that he was back in his native land, faded into one that was dim and flickering, not to say weird and deadly as corpse-light. To superstitious minds, like that of the King, the very presence of the young Earl seemed to cause something like a shiver.

When the curtain had fallen on the tragedy, and all the actors were dead and buried, then, and not till then, did this ungenerous man and most unkingly king give public evidence of those sentiments of aversion not only to the young Earl and his family, but even to their name, which had so long possessed his petty soul. He forfeited their title and estates. That was natural, and according to the doctrine of those days legitimate. But with inconceivable littleness he proscribed their very name ; nay, more, he left not a stone unturned to blast the poor dead youth's reputation. Every piece of gossip, every scrap of tittle-tattle which could be hunted up or invented to prove Gowrie's "sorceries," was industriously pieced together and used as evidence against him. Of a truth, the old time-honoured rule of natural morality, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum,* had no place in James' pitiful and revengeful nature.

It shows how profoundly James' avarice had been moved, that with all this suspicion, all this distrust rankling in his breast, he should, nevertheless, have

trusted himself within the walls of Gowrie House. For the moment all these feelings seem to have been forgotten, swallowed up in that still more engrossing passion—the lust of gold. He entered the old chateau evidently very excited at the prospect of emerging from it a much richer man than he went in.

The first thing he did was to call for a drink. It was long of coming, the Duke of Lennox tells us. Then dinner was not ready, though, as we have seen, the Master had sent a message begging his brother to have it prepared. These were trifles, but they seem to have added fuel to his agitation. He began to fidget.

"When am I to go to the privy-concealed house?" he whispered to Alexander. "Could I not go and have a look at the man while dinner is being got ready? Are you quite certain that he and his treasure are safe under lock and key?"

Alexander had much ado to keep the King quiet.

"All is sure enough," he told James; "and really there is no hurry. Your Majesty is tired and hungry; you must dine first;" and he ended by entreating the King not to be seen whispering to him before his brother, as it might attract attention and might rouse the Earl's suspicion.

At last, after he had waited an hour, dinner came. And a very bad one it was. The Earl had already dined, so the King had to put up with a cold dinner—"Yea! a very cold one," said courtly Mr Patrick Galloway, the King's chaplain, giving an account of the transaction in the sermon he preached afterwards from the Cross of Edinburgh.

During all the time of the King's repast, Gowrie stood behind His Majesty's chair. Something had

evidently discomposed him, for he was moody and pensive, seldom speaking to the King, but often whispering over his shoulder to one or other of the servants, and frequently leaving the room.

Meantime the King's retinue, numbering fifteen persons, were standing about the King, grumbling at the inhospitality of their reception. For it was the custom, after the King's first service had been brought up, to invite his train to sit down to dinner in an adjoining apartment, and no such invitation appeared to be forthcoming. When at last, the King having nearly finished dinner, it did come, Gowrie, instead of sitting down with his guests, as etiquette required, only conveyed them to the hall, and then returning, took up his position again behind His Majesty's chair.

The King's "banquet"—or, as we should say, his dessert—was nearly ended, when he felt a light pull at his coat tail.

Turning half round, he saw Master Alexander at his back.

"Get my brother out of the room," he whispered.

James called the Earl to him.

"Deil tak me, man!" he began jocosely, "this is a pretty way to treat your guests! Money fouk an' countries though ye've seen, ye've no learned yet how to entertain your friends in Scottish fashion. Ye've not even had the grace to drink the King's health. But come," he said, rising and filling a cup with wine to the brim, "I'll learn ye how a Scottish man should behave. Tak' that; gang into the hall, and give the rest of the company a skaal [health or toast] from me. Bid them welcome to Gowrie in the King's name!"

III.

Scottish architecture, always a strong point in our national civilisation, was very nearly at its best in the early part of the sixteenth century, when Gowrie House was built, and in that historic house was to be found one of its most characteristic examples.

How the honest citizens of the Fair City could have permitted its demolition it is difficult to understand. It was so identified with the history of the town, it was so picturesque in itself, and it was in such good condition, that its removal in 1807 to make room for the present County Buildings appears little short of an act of sacrilege. A portion of one of its walls—and its walls, judging from this specimen, were forty-five inches thick—forming the front of the "Gowrie Inn," and an old "turnpike," like that of which we shall have something to say presently, are the only vestiges of it which now remain. They are in greater danger from the hand of man than from the scythe of time.

Fortunately, however, pictures and descriptions of it are extant, and from these we can obtain an accurate idea of what it was like.

A large, irregular, crow-stepped-gabled, pepper-box turreted building, occupying, but not entirely, three sides of a square, with a paved courtyard in the middle, and with a large garden behind and on its southern side sloping down towards the Tay, in its general arrangement it much resembled the town residences of the nobility then so common in provincial towns in France and other continental countries.

Access to it from the street was gained by an arched

gateway in its western wall, and this wall connected its southern and northern blocks. It is with the first of these that we are alone concerned.

This block, which lay east and west, was of two storeys. It was a thin, ungainly, yet not unpicturesque piece of masonry. Its gable, which faced the street, was broken by four square windows, and at its north-west corner was a small pepper-box turret, known by the name of the Earl's Study, and lighted by two narrow windows, one of which looked into the court-yard, the other on to the street. Within the courtyard, on its northern wall, was another turret, known by the name of the Black Turnpike, from its containing a small, dark, circular stair which gave access to the chambers on both storeys. And further down this same wall, where this southern block joined on to the eastern block of the building, was a square tower which contained the main staircase to the mansion-house—broader than the Black Turnpike, but, like it, also circular in its staircase.

Two storeys were all that this southern block contained, and the rooms in each were few in number. On the ground storey there were three rooms, all of which opened into one another. The eastmost of these was the small room where the King dined. This opened into the hall where his retinue were entertained, and this into another large apartment. On the top storey were two chambers only—the one a "fair galerie" occupying two-thirds of the whole length of the block; the other what was known as the Gallery Chamber.

As this Gallery Chamber is the scene of the tragedy, it deserves a word or two of special description. There were two modes of access to it. One of these was

by a door in the middle of the partition wall which separated it from the gallery; the other was by a door on its north side leading into the Black Turnpike. As has been already said, the "round" or turret which was known as the Earl's Study was at the north-west corner of this Gallery Chamber, from which it was shut off by a door. When that door was opened it formed a cove or recess in the chamber very suitable for purposes of retirement or study.

To this Gallery Chamber Alexander now conducted the King. But he did so in a rather roundabout way. Instead of taking him up the main staircase, he led him through the hall where his retainers were at dinner. His object in doing so was soon made manifest. For, as the pair passed through the hall, Alexander whispered to the King to "command publicly that none should follow him." The King did so, and as he left the hall by the door which divided it from the adjoining apartment, Alexander turned the key behind him. He now conducted the King to the first landing of the Black Turnpike, and here again he locked the door. As they ascended the Turnpike the Master, with a more smiling countenance than he had worn all the day before, more than once remarked that "he had *him*"—whom he meant he did not say—"sure and safe enough." Entering the Gallery Chamber through the Turnpike door, he locked it also, and then he advanced, still followed by the King, to the door of the little study in the "round." It was locked.

Opening it with a key which he produced, he made the King enter first.

But instead of the bondman whom he expected, James, to his terror and astonishment, found himself confronted by "a freeman with a dagger at his girdle"

—a tall, stalwart figure, whose countenance betokened as much surprise as was now visible on that of the King. The King, however, had no time for wonder. For the next moment Alexander had locked the study door, had drawn the dagger from the strange man's girdle, and with its point directed towards the King's breast was telling him, with fierce countenance and many oaths, that now he was at his mercy, and that if he spoke one word or opened a window to look out, the dagger that he carried in his hand would be up to the hilt in His Majesty's breast.

"Does your conscience," he asked the King in a voice almost inarticulate with passion, "not reproach you with the murder of my father? Does the innocent blood that you spilled sixteen years ago not rise up in judgment against you, now that you are once again in the power of a Ruthven?"

Alarmed though he was, James, if we may believe his own account, did not lose his composure.

He was a minor, he told the Master, when that deplorable event had occurred, and in the hands of a faction by whom he was bound hand and foot. How then could his conscience be burdened with old Grey Steel's death? Then, adroitly turning the tables and appealing to Alexander's conscience in his turn, he asked him if he had not deserved well at the hands of all his race, not only by restoring his brother to his lands and dignities, but by "nourishing and bringing up of two or three of his sisters by a continual attendance upon" his well-beloved Queen "in her privy chamber"?

"And think ye, man," he continued, "how horrible a thing 'twould be were you to intermeddle with my innocent blood? Yea, be assured, it would not be left unavenged, for God has given me baith bairns and good

subjects; an' if it were not so, He would raise up sticks and stones to punish so vile a deed."

Noticing that his words were beginning to tell upon Alexander, James redoubled his efforts.

"Are not ye of the same religion—do you not hold the same faith that I do mysel? What would that holy man, Mr. Robert Rollock, whose scholar ye be, say when he learns of your unnatural cruelty? An' I swear to you, man, on the word of a Prince, that if ye'll but spare my life, and suffer me to gang out frae here, to never a soul will I reveal that which ye have intended, nor will I permit that ye bruik the slightest harm or punishment for your deed."

Alexander was visibly moved. Uncovering his head, he swore and protested that His Majesty's life would be safe if he would but be quiet and make no noise or crying. Meanwhile he must go and seek his brother, and bring him to speak with the King.

"And what good will that do?" asked the King.

"That," said Alexander, "my brother will tell your Grace."

Then turning to the man from whom he had taken the dagger, who had remained all this time a silent spectator of this extraordinary scene—

"I make you the King's keeper," he said. "See that ye keep him safely, or your life will suffer for it."

With these words he went out, locking the door behind him.

As soon as he had gone, the King turned to his keeper and asked him whether he was appointed to be his murderer. Trembling and shaking, the man protested with an oath that he did not know for what purpose he had been placed there; that he had been put in by force and the door locked upon him but a few

minutes before the Master and the King had entered, and that as for any conspiracy against the King's life, he was absolutely ignorant of it.

"Then," said the King, "open the window on my right hand."

The man at once obeyed.

At that moment Alexander entered. The King's quick eye at once detected a change in his manner which boded no good. He was very excited, gesticulating wildly with his hands, and evidently labouring under great agitation.

"No!" he exclaimed, "there's no help for it. I cannot mend it. Your Majesty behoves to die."

With that he whipped off one of his garters, and advancing towards the King laid his hand upon his wrist, telling him that he must bind his hands.

James at once perceived his danger. Protesting that he was born a free King and would die a free King, he suddenly extricated himself from his grip. Alexander then laid his hand upon his sword, attempting at the same instant to thrust two or three fingers of his left hand into the King's mouth to prevent him from crying out. But before he could do so James had caught him by the throat, and clutching hold of the hand that was holding the sword, was driving him backwards towards the window.

The King was much the stronger and heavier man of the two, but the Master strenuously contested every inch of the ground. James, however, succeeded in reaching the window. Then thrusting his right elbow and the right side of his head, from which his hat had fallen in the struggle, through the narrow casement, he shouted "Treason!" and "Murder!" at the top of his voice.

IV.

We must now return to the King's retinue, whom we left at dinner in the Great Hall.

When their repast was finished, Lord Gowrie, remarking on the loveliness of the afternoon, proposed that they should take a turn in the garden till the King again required their attendance. He sent for the key accordingly, and conducted his guests to the garden in person. But they had hardly entered within its shades when Thomas Cranston, one of the Earl's servants, hastily approached his master, and, in a voice that all could hear, announced that the King had just ridden out towards the Inch.

"Towards the Inch!" exclaimed the Earl with well-feigned astonishment.

The man repeated his message.

"Then, my lords," said Gowrie, "we had better take horse and follow him."

A general rush towards the stables ensued. Lennox and the Earl, who were walking together, passed through the garden gate in company.

To reach the stables they had to cross the court-yard round which the mansion was built, and as they passed the porter's lodge, Lennox, who with the Earl had been discussing the King's unexpected departure, asked the servant who kept it whether the King had really left the house. The man said, No. If he had ridden out he would have been sure to have seen him.

"You lie," said Gowrie, suddenly thrown off his guard, "he has gone out by the back gate." But recovering himself immediately, he turned to the Duke

and said, that to make sure he would go into the house and inquire. "Meantime, my Lord," he said, "You had better stop here and have a cup of wine, while I go and ascertain the verity and the certainty of this business."

He was gone but a few minutes. When he returned he told Lennox that the King had certainly ridden out a good while before, and by the back gate, as he had said, and that unless they made haste they would not overtake him.

At this moment a cry of "Treason!" was heard.

"That is the King's voice," said Lennox, laying his hand on his sword, and addressing the Earl of Mar, who was standing beside him; "I know it is the King's voice, be he where he will."

The cry was repeated. Looking up they saw the King looking from the window of the Earl's study, with his hat off, his face red, and a hand gripping his cheek and mouth, and the King crying, "I am murdered! Treason! My Lord Mar, help, help!"

Without an instant's delay, the Duke, Mar, and the rest of the King's company rushed to the main entrance of the building, dashed up the staircase, and ran through the great gallery to the door of the Gallery Chamber. They found it locked. Seeing a ladder standing beside it, they began to batter at it with it. The ladder broke, and they sent for hammers. But the door resisted all their efforts.

Meantime young John Ramsay, one of the King's pages, who was on his way to the stables to get his horse, but had turned back on hearing the King's cry, entered the court-yard. He had a hawk of the King's on his wrist, which he had taken from its keeper to

let the man get his dinner. Noticing that the door of the Black Turnpike was open, without waiting to disembarrass himself of the bird, he flew up the dark, narrow staircase.

The door at the top was locked, but he heard the din of persons struggling within.

Bursting it open by main force, he rushed into the Gallery Chamber to find to his horror the King and Alexander Ruthven in death grips. The King had Alexander's head under his arm, but Ruthven's hand was on the King's mouth, and they were struggling and wrestling together, while behind them a third man, shivering and quaking like an aspen leaf, watched the conflict in silent terror.

James caught sight of Ramsay at once, and seeing him advancing to his assistance, called to him to strike low, as the Master had on a sword-proof doublet. To let go the bird, to draw his hanger, and to strike the King's assailant to the ground, was the work of an instant. In the midst of the confusion that prevailed, the mysterious onlooker disappeared.

No sooner was Alexander down than the King began dragging him to the door of the turnpike with the evident intention of throwing him downstairs. While he was thus engaged Ramsay rushed to the window, and seeing Sir Thomas Erskine and Dr. Herries and one of Erskine's servants in the court-yard below, called to them to come up at once. They did so, passing on their way over the body of the young Master, who was lying on the stair, bleeding from his neck and face.

"Fie!" cried Erskine to the Doctor, "this is the traitor—strike him."

Herries accordingly did so ; Erskine following his example.

"Alas!" said the dying man, turning his face to his assailants, "I had not the wyte [blame] of it." These were the last words he uttered.

Erskine and the Doctor had barely reached the Gallery Chamber—indeed they had not had time even to shut the door—when Gowrie and seven of his servants, with steel bonnets on their heads and drawn swords in their hands, burst into the apartment. They made at once for the King. Perceiving his imminent danger, Erskine, Ramsay, and Herries closed round about him, as he was in the act of picking up Alexander's sword, which had dropped among the grass and rushes with which, in accordance with the custom of those days, the floor was strewed, and shoved him back into the little study in the round, locking the door upon him.

A terrible contest then ensued. The King's adherents were but four in number ; Gowrie's party numbered eight. But for their hangers, the King's partisans were unarmed ; Gowrie's were armed to the teeth. But fortune, that ever befriends the brave, favoured the loyal little band. Gowrie was pierced through the heart by a stroke from Sir John Ramsay's sword. His servants were "dung down the stairs with many hurts." Though Erskine, Herries, Ramsay, and Erskine's servant were all seriously injured, not one of them lost his life.

The fight was hardly over when the door between the Gallery and the Gallery Chamber, at which Lennox and the rest of the King's servants had been battering for the last half-hour, yielded to their strokes, and in a tumultuous manner they rushed into the apartment.

Then the door of the little study was unlocked, and the King brought out.

Falling on his knees "in the midst of his owne servants, and they all kneeling round about him, His Majestie out of his owne mouth thanked God for that miraculous deliverance and victory, assuring himself that God had preserved him from so despaird a perill for the perfeiting of some greater work behind, to His glory, and for procuring by him the weal of his people, that God had committed to his charge."

V.

SUCH was the tragedy of Gowrie—an affair so mysterious, so apparently meaningless, so utterly unexpected and unexplainable, that it is not to be wondered at that to this day there are those who decline to accept James's story. Substituting for it a theory, which seems to make even greater demands upon our credulity, they would have us believe that, instead of being the victim, James was the author of the outrage; that, in short, the whole business was a base and cleverly executed plot on the part of the King to rid himself of a family for whom he had not only a personal and political, but indeed a hereditary hatred. And this view, though no one dared to express it openly, found adherents even at the time.

Foremost amongst these was a small but determined body of the clergy, who regarded Gowrie as a possible leader, and who could not be brought to think evil of one whom they personally held in such esteem. No persuasions, no threats, no reasonings, not those of the King himself, could induce them to assent to what was always the Court party's theory of the business—that a great political conspiracy underlay the affair.

Yet little by little proof came to hand to show that this theory was not so untterly untenable after all—proof which, unless we make up our minds entirely to reject it, will go far to strengthen the conclusion that not only did such a conspiracy exist, but that it was one of the most audacious that ever entered into the mind of man to devise. So bold, so original, so exotic, if we may use the term, was it alike in its conception and its execution, that to none but one who was

acquainted with the crafty ways of Continental intrigue was it likely to have occurred. There was, in short, but one man in Scotland who could have imagined such a scheme, and that was the young Earl of Gowrie.

The first piece of evidence that the Government managed to procure was the finding of the mysterious third party who had been present at the scene in the turret. He turned out to be Andrew Henderson, the Earl's chamberlain, the same who had accompanied the Master to Falkland in the morning. His testimony entirely corroborated that of the King, and was accordingly distrusted.

But nine years later there was found amongst the papers of a certain George Sprott, a notary at Eyemouth, a series of letters which, if authentic—and their authenticity, though often questioned, has never yet been disproved—established the existence of a plot beyond the reach of doubt, and also laid bare the mode of its intended execution.

The movers in the plot were the Earl, the Master, and one other high personage, whose name is not disclosed. The instruments were a certain Robert Logan, Laird of Restalrig, and his creature—a queer, ignorant, faithful, half silly bonnet-laird, who was known as Laird Bour. And the plot was, that after being decoyed to Gowrie, James was to be embarked on board a little boat, which was to be in waiting in a small creek of the Tay, and conveyed to Restalrig's house at Fast Castle, a desolate keep in Berwickshire, on the shores of the German Ocean, destined to be immortalised in years long after as the Wolf's Crag in the "Bride of Lammermoor," and there detained till he had acceded to the demands, whatever they may have been—and we may be sure

they would not have stopped far short of the supreme control of the kingdom—of the conspirators.

Such was the plot. It failed, as we have seen. And its failure has been the cause of shrouding in mysterious obscurity one of the most daring and one of the most insolent attacks ever attempted by a bold and arrogant nobility upon the person and prerogative of their King.

There is little hope that this obscurity will ever be dispelled. To the end of time, the Tragedy of Gowrie will remain, in the words used by William Moncrieff of Moncrieff to James, "A strange story, please your Majesty, if it be true!"